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This study concludes by showing how the tactics of Henry Morgan are important to the military leader today. Morgan serves as an example of how to apply the elements of combat power. Morgan's use of maneuver is a text book example for young leaders to study today. Perhaps most important is Morgan's example of how leadership is vital to every military operation. The study of Morgan's leadership and how he was able to achieve what others thought could not be done is an example for all leaders.

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fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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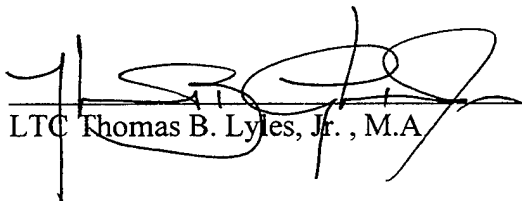
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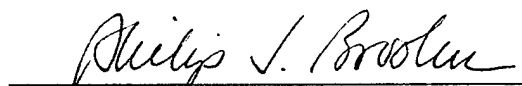
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ABSTRACT

THE ATTACK ON PANAMA CITY BY HENRY MORGAN, by MAJ Walter E. Piatt, USA, 132 pages.

This study reviews Sir Henry Morgan's attack on Panama City in 1671. Henry Morgan was successful because he applied combat power correctly. Morgan faced an enemy of superior numbers, yet he was successful. Morgan chose an objective that was thought to be unobtainable, yet he won. Morgan received no formal education in the art of war; he learned from his own experience and the experience of the pirates before him. In his last great exploit Morgan chose the famous city of Panama for his objective. This study shows how Morgan applied the elements of combat power in capturing Panama City, a city never before conquered.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In January of 1671 Henry Morgan led 1,400 pirates across the isthmus of Panama and attacked Panama City. The city was defended by a garrison made up of over 4,000 Spanish soldiers and slaves. The battle for Panama City lasted only several hours. Henry Morgan and his army of pirates achieved victory quickly, capturing a city though to be impregnable. Morgan's attack on Panama City was successful for several reasons, the most important was the ability of Morgan to apply the elements of combat power over the Spanish Army that defended the city. This thesis will show how Henry Morgan applied the elements of combat power to achieve victory in his attack on Panama City.

Combat power is created by combining the elements of maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership. The combination of these elements is what gives a force the ability to fight. Combat power is defined by the United States Army Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations*. When the four elements are integrated and applied correctly, they will impact greatly on the outcome of a military campaign or battle. Leaders integrate maneuver, firepower, and protection capabilities in a variety of combinations appropriate to the situation. The military leader seeks to apply combat power in a manner to achieve victory over the enemy, while sustaining minimal loss. The dynamics of combat power are part of U.S. Army doctrine. The role of doctrine is to teach leaders how the army will fight wars and conduct operations other than war.¹

Stated simply, doctrine teaches leaders how to fight and combat power is that ability to fight. Army doctrine and the elements of combat power were not created by the modern armies of today. They evolved from military history, military theory, and lessons learned from the mistakes and successes of past commanders. The study of Henry Morgan's attack on Panama City is a study of the successful application of the doctrinal elements of combat power.

There is little documented research on the military exploits of Sir Henry Morgan and the contributions his exploits have made to military history. History remembers Henry Morgan as a Pirate or Buccaneer, but he was also an extremely successful military commander. His greatest military achievement was his attack on Panama City in 1671. U.S. Army doctrine was obviously not yet available for Henry Morgan to study. Henry Morgan did not learn his doctrine from military books or military schooling. Morgan learned how to fight from those who went before him and from his own life experience. So to did modern military and U.S. Army doctrine evolve from successful military exploits throughout history. There is much to learn about the leader of pirates who became a knight of the realm and how he was able to capture a city thought to be unattainable.

This thesis will answer the question of how Henry Morgan applied the elements of combat power successfully in his capture of Panama City in 1671. It will analyze the four elements of combat power: maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership. How did Henry Morgan use maneuver to gain the advantage and position his forces to achieve surprise, psychological shock, physical momentum, massed effects and moral

dominance? How was he able to achieve superior firepower over an enemy four times as large as his force and defeat the enemy's ability and will to fight? How was he able to protect his force over a long ocean movement, two land assaults, and a nine-day grueling march through the jungles of Panama? How was he able to inspire his soldiers with the will to win and provide purpose, direction, and motivation in combat against overwhelming odds? To answer these questions it is first necessary to understand the elements that make up combat power.

Combat power is created by combining the elements of maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership against the enemy elements of combat power. Overwhelming combat power is achieved when all the elements of combat power are organized together against the enemy. Combat power must be applied at a decisive time and place. By careful analysis of the friendly and enemy elements of combat power, military leaders can determine weaknesses and strengths of both friendly and enemy forces. This analysis is a useful tool in the U.S. Army staff planning process and is used to evaluate courses of action for an operation. By knowing the enemy's strengths and weaknesses a commander can determine where best to apply combat power. The U.S. Army teaches its leaders today to look for where and how to gain a combat power advantage over the enemy.²

Maneuver is the movement of forces in relation to the enemy to gain an advantage. Advantage could also be achieved by allowing the enemy to move into a position of disadvantage.³ Moving forces into a position of advantage sounds simple but it is often a difficult task. Commanders must identify where a position of advantage exist. This is extremely difficult and requires a commander to study the enemy in great

detail. Most military leaders think maneuver is attacking the enemy rear or the enemy flank. These are obvious areas of weakness for the enemy but are not always that simple to move against. How a force will maneuver against another depends on the situation and the mission of the attacking force. If maneuver was as simple as attacking the rear or the flank of the enemy, then armies today would have little difficulty developing future battlefield commanders.

How does a force attack another force in the rear without exposing its own rear or flank to attack? Commanders learn to choose a form of maneuver which will best accomplish their mission. Maneuver is extremely important to every military operation and it is stressed throughout the doctrine of the U.S. Army. Maneuver is taught to U.S. Army officers as one of the nine principles of war, one of the four elements of combat power, and one of the seven battlefield operating systems.⁴ A quote by Sir William Slim may best describe maneuver and its importance in today's military.

*"There is only one principle of war and that's this. Hit the other fellow, as quick as you can, and as hard as you can, where it hurts him the most, when he ain't looking."*⁵

Maneuver becomes even more important, and more difficult, when the ratio of friendly and enemy forces are equal. When the attacking force has less than the defending force, maneuver is the key to the smaller force's success. Morgan faced a force four times as large as his army of pirates when he attacked Panama City in 1671. How did he use maneuver to place his forces in a position of advantage over the Spanish? To understand this question, it is first important to understand a little about military doctrine concerning offensive and defensive operations.

When on the attack the general rule for the attacker is to have more forces than the defendant. Defending forces have a particular advantage since they own the ground and have prepared the defense. The one advantage the attacker has, is that the attacker picks the time and the place of the attack. If the attacker is able to maneuver his forces into a position where the enemy does not expect him, or an area where the enemy is weak, then the attacker has used maneuver to his advantage. This is particularly true when a small force is attacking a larger force. A smaller force is able to gain an advantage over a larger force by attacking where the defending larger force is weak. Moving forces into a position of advantage is critical to the success of every operation. To be successful also requires that the attacking force possess the capability to destroy the enemy once they have gained the advantage, this is done through firepower.

Firepower is defined as the destructive force essential to defeat the enemies ability and will to fight. Firepower is the total destructive capability a force possesses. In today's military, firepower is the combination of both direct and indirect weapon systems integrated on the battlefield for the purpose of obtaining a desired effect on the enemy. Today the U.S. military possesses an arsenal of lethal firepower capable of precision assaults over great distances.⁶ In 1671 Henry Morgan possessed men on foot with long-barreled muskets, accurate up to three hundred yards, and swords.⁷ The enemy possessed horse cavalry, infantry soldiers with muskets, direct fire cannon, fortifications to defend from, and slaves to load muskets. The U.S. Army teaches that firepower is most effective when combined with the maneuver force. For Morgan to be effective it was absolutely necessary to combine firepower with the maneuver force.⁸ To be successful against a

larger force, a smaller force, must combine firepower and maneuver and apply them at the decisive time and place on the battlefield. How was Morgan able to achieve superior firepower over the Spanish forces defending Panama City? How was Morgan's smaller force able to destroy the ability and the will of the Spanish to fight? Morgan was successful because he naturally knew how to combine maneuver and firepower, the first two elements of combat power.

The third element of combat power is protection. Protection is how a commander conserves the fighting force so that the force can be applied at the decisive time and place. U.S. Army doctrine teaches commanders that protection has four components: operational security, health, safety, and prevention of fratricide.⁹ Force protection was crucial to Morgan's success. Chances for success in all operations are far better when the enemy does not know the plans of the attacker.

The first component of protection is operational security. Operational security is more than just denying the enemy information about the operation. Operational security also takes measures to prevent the enemy from observing the movement of the force. Measures to do this include proper reconnaissance and counter-reconnaissance. Successful operations, especially offensive operations, require detailed reconnaissance. Morgan knew that good reconnaissance was the key to a successful operation.¹⁰ Reconnaissance informs the commander of the security of a chosen route and potential threat along that route. Today commanders ensure force protection by denying the enemy the ability to harm friendly forces. This is done by dispersing forces on the ground when deployed in tactical situations. When units are not deployed in tactical situations, lodging

facilities are protected by passive and active measures, to ensure the safety of the soldiers when in a garrison environment. Protecting the force means not to create a target of your force for the enemy. Morgan knew that to be successful in his operations he needed to protect his force. Protecting the force during an operation was always a consideration of Morgan since his force was often outnumbered.

The second component of protection is health. Healthy troops fight better than sick ones. Morale of healthy troops is higher. The Army teaches commanders today to take care of the basic health needs of every soldier. This component also includes guarding of equipment and supplies.¹¹ History is full of lessons of armies that lost more casualties to disease rather than wounds suffered in battle. Morgan's forces did not possess a health service and support system. Morgan's men only knew that they would be compensated monetarily for wounds suffered in battle.¹² Morgan did however know the importance of protecting his supplies and equipment.¹³

The third component of protection is safety. Safety is crucial to the preservation of combat power.¹⁴ In today's military, safety is planned into every operation. Reducing risk to soldiers is how the military protects the force. Morgan most likely did not do a formal risk analysis prior to every operation, but Morgan did always consider what the risk was to his force.¹⁵

The fourth component is the prevention of fratricide. Fratricide is the unintentional killing or wounding of friendly forces.¹⁶ Avoidance of fratricide is extremely important in today's military. It is also extremely difficult to limit the

possibilities of fratricide when planning for an operation. The key is to reduce the probability of fratricide while not constricting the boldness of the commander.¹⁷

Most likely Morgan did not consider protection consisting of four components. Morgan did however protect his force and was able to apply his force at the decisive time and place to achieve victory. How did Morgan protect his equipment, supplies and men on his movement to Panama? Morgan moved by water and through thick jungle on his way to Panama. Morgan's movement consisted of two other land assaults prior to his attack on Panama City, yet he arrived to Panama with a fighting force able to defeat the Spanish garrison.

The fourth element of combat power is leadership. U.S. Army doctrine states that the most essential element of combat power is the leadership of competent and confident officers and noncommissioned officers. It is the leader who determines how to best apply maneuver, firepower, and protection. Competence of the leader is what makes units successful. Preparing for war is what good leaders do. Leaders prepare for war by reading the exploits of the leaders who were successful and unsuccessful in war. The study of Morgan is important for this reason. Army doctrine teaches leaders that the study of military history, theory, and past commanders is invaluable.¹⁸

Leaders give a vision to the unit they command and provide a positive influence on achieving that vision. The U. S. Army stresses that the professional competence, personality, and the will of a strong commander represents a significant part of the unit's combat power.¹⁹

U. S. Army doctrine defines leadership as the process of influencing people to accomplish the mission.²⁰ Morgan was not a school trained soldier.²¹ Pirates followed Morgan because they knew he would be successful. How did Morgan form a mob into a powerful force capable of defeating the Spanish defending Panama City? Morgan's leadership was key to all his military exploits. He knew how to motivate the ugliest of men, because he was one of them. Morgan knew what it took to focus the energy of an untrained band of buccaneers and lead them to victory against overwhelming odds.

Morgan's men were from many different backgrounds and nationalities. They were English, Dutch and French. Few were soldiers with any formal military training, all were tough men. All swore to fight to the death, if necessary, to obtain their objective, the wealth of Panama City. How was Morgan, the son of a wealthy Welshman, with no former military training, able to defeat the Spanish army defending Panama City? How was a man who worked his way through the ranks, able to organize and lead an army of buccaneers? The military exploits of Henry Morgan show how he developed his tactics and techniques throughout his life and how these techniques led him to success in his attack on Panama City.

Morgan's military background consisted of only the stories and the reputations of the pirates who ventured before him, lessons from his mentors, and his own experience. With no military training, Morgan was able to apply, what is today called, the elements of combat power. Morgan applied the elements of combat power effectively to achieve victory in his attack on Panama City. This thesis is an historical account of the life of Henry Morgan. It combines the historical record of the attack on Panama City along with

first hand accounts of the exploits of Morgan. Numerous books and documents were researched about piracy and are referenced throughout this thesis. This work documents how Morgan applied the elements of combat power in his capture of Panama City. Additionally, this thesis will include research of the actual ground where Morgan attacked. To appreciate the magnitude of Morgan's attack this thesis will compare Morgan's maneuver with the tactics that the U.S. Army practices today.

This thesis is important to today's military and military leader. It is a study of a successful military commander and how he applied the elements of combat power. It will allow for a better understanding of the elements of combat power, and demonstrate that, when applied correctly, they will lead to success on the battlefield. This thesis will also demonstrate that when analyzing combat power today, the key is to analyze where friendly strengths can be applied against enemy weakness. Henry Morgan should be studied by every young officer in the military today. Morgan conquered difficult and challenging objectives. The tactics Morgan used were text book infantry maneuvers. There is much that can be learned from the study of Morgan, he always applied the basics and he was always successful.

This thesis is limited to the military exploits of Henry Morgan and his successful capture of Panama City. This thesis will not explain the sometimes ruthless methods of pirates. Morgan himself was not a pirate but he was at times ruthless, barbaric, and merciless. This thesis will not defend, in any way, the actions of Morgan and his men once the objective was seized. This is not an attempt to glorify Morgan as a man. The time when Morgan lived was a ruthless time in the world. Nations fought other nations

for the right to exploit the New World. People were often killed due to their religious beliefs or simply because they lived in an area that was being exploited for wealth. The focus of this thesis is purely to show how Henry Morgan applied combat power effectively in his attack on Panama City.

¹United States Army, Headquarters Department of the Army Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1993.), 2-10 - 2-11.

²Ibid., 2-0 - 2-11.

³Ibid., 2-10.

⁴Ibid., 2-0 - 2-15.

⁵Sir William Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1956), 550-551.

⁶FM 100-5, 2-10.

⁷David Cordingly, *Pirates, Terror on the High Seas from the Caribbean to the South China Sea* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1996.), 39-40

⁸FM 100-5, 2-10.

⁹Ibid., 2-10 - 2-11.

¹⁰Howard Pyle, *The Buccaneers and Marooners of America* (Michigan: Gryphon Books, 1971), 215.

¹¹FM 100-5, 2-11.

¹²Peter Gerhard, *Pirates on the West Coast of New Spain* (California: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1960), 135-139

¹³Pyle, 220.

¹⁴FM 100-5, 2-11.

¹⁵Pyle, 220.

¹⁶FM 100-5, 2-11.

¹⁷Ibid., 2-11.

¹⁸Ibid., 2-11.

¹⁹Ibid., 2-11.

²⁰Ibid., 1-3.

²¹Gerhard, 139.

CHAPTER 2

PAST PIRATES

To understand the magnitude of Henry Morgan's attack on Panama City, it is important to first understand a little of the history of piracy, and the city he attacked. This chapter will describe how piracy began, and how the evolution of piracy, influenced the tactics of Henry Morgan. This chapter will describe the lives of several important pirates who preceded Henry Morgan and may have influenced how he learned to apply combat power.

The story of piracy and how Panama became a wealthy city is directly linked to the Spanish occupation of the New World. That story begins when Christopher Columbus discovered what he thought were the West Indies.¹

When Christopher Columbus landed on a small island near Cuba in 1492, the natives of the island swam out to welcome him. They offered Columbus gifts of cotton and parrots. Columbus noticed that some of the natives, who Columbus mistakenly calls Indians, were wearing small pieces of gold. When Columbus asked the natives where the gold came from, they responded, that it came from the lands to the south.²

Columbus explored Cuba and the Island of Haiti and found gold but not the endless source the natives talked about. Columbus decided to attempt to make a settlement on Haiti, and left a party of men behind to form a colony. It was expected that the men left behind would establish relations with the natives, learn the language, and discover where the gold was located.³

Columbus returned several times to the New World and found that his attempts to establish a colony were destroyed. Columbus continued to explore the New World and never gave up his goal of finding the Indies. Before his death in 1506, Columbus explored the coast of Central America and the northern tip of South America. Columbus is remembered as an explorer and a discoverer, but when he found gold, Columbus laid the foundation for the eventual colonization of the New World by Spain.

Spain occupied the New World to expand the throne, the Catholic Church, and to find gold. The New World was explored, conquered, and then exploited for everything it could yield for the Kingdom of Spain. After a rough start in Haiti, Spain became extremely successful at exploiting the New World for gold. Natives were forced to work the gold mines. At first, the natives were to be paid for working the mines in Haiti, then they were forced into slavery to mine the gold. When the natives protested they were hunted and slaughtered. When the native population could no longer be forced into working the mines, slaves were brought in from Africa to provide a work force.⁴

A large portion of gold found by Spanish explorers was sent back to the reigning monarch. Exploration of the New World was a sure way to gain fame and fortune for the explorer if he was successful. Spain rapidly expanded her claim on the New World. When and if opposition was mounted, the conqueror would often ruthlessly destroy the native people of the land.

No real serious opposition was ever encountered by the Spanish. The Spanish were always easily able put down resistance by providing more men with more firepower. The people who lived in the Caribbean and Central and South America were for the most

part unarmed and unable to resist Spanish soldiers. The Spanish empire grew enormously from the profits of the New World.

Many native civilizations existed in what is now called Panama, before the Spanish conquered and occupied the territory. These native, often called Indian civilizations, were well developed and knew how to work with gold and silver. When the Spanish explorer Vasco Nunez de Balboa explored the jungles Panama in 1513 he discovered the Pacific Ocean.⁵ Balboa named the ocean the South Sea, because he traveled south to make his discovery. It was not until Magellan, reached the ocean on an exploration a few years later, that it was named the Pacific.⁶ Balboa's discovery was extremely important for further expansion of the Spanish Empire. Not only did Balboa discover the Pacific Ocean, he also discovered a route across Panama. This discovery set the stage for a Spanish colony on the Pacific coast.

Panama City was established in 1517, six miles north and east from where the city is currently located. The location of the city was a swampy plain of no real strategic importance. The natural lay of the land did not enable the city to control any hostile approach by sea or land.⁷ It was, however, a port, which would allow ships to dock. The city itself was built by enslaving the local tribes of natives and forcing them to build the city. The city soon became the launching point for further Spanish exploration of South America. Spanish colonies soon formed in South America when more gold was discovered in the Incan Empire, in what is now known as Peru.

Getting the gold from South America back to Spain was a serious logistical challenge. Spain met this challenge by constructing a road from Panama City, on the

Pacific Ocean side of the country, to Porto Bello, a port city on the Atlantic side. Gold was brought to Panama City by ship, transported across the isthmus by slaves and mules along the Las Cruces Trail to Porto Bello. Another option was to transport the cargo over land as far as Venta Cruz, then by boat down the Chagres River to Porto Bello.⁸ The gold would then be stored at Porto Bello and await transport back to Spain by boat.

The Las Cruces Trail became known as the King's Highway, the gold road, or Camino Real. This road also assisted with commerce between Europe and Asia. The development of the route across the isthmus allowed Panama City and Porto Bello to grow rapidly from jungle outposts to huge productive and wealthy cities vital to the Spanish Empire.

Spain controlled her new empire by not allowing trade with anyone from Europe other than mainland Spain. When would be traders attempted to make money selling slaves or other goods, they were turned back. The first man to force trade on the Spanish settlements was an Englishman named John Hawkins. Hawkins, later Sir John Hawkins, forced several settlements to trade with him by showing military force. Soon the settlements began to fortify themselves and were prepared not to have trade terms forced upon them.⁹

Hawkins continued to trade with the Spanish, his efforts were often met with hostilities, which ended in terrible results. On several voyages, Hawkins took along a young man named Francis Drake. Drake sold everything to finance his ventures with Hawkins. In 1567, Hawkins and Drake sailed the Caribbean to trade slaves. The voyage was halted at Cartagena, when the Spanish there robbed Hawkins and Drake of their

slaves, ships, and crew. Hawkins and the young Drake barely escaped with their lives.

Drake now looked at Spain in a different view. He soon became a believer, and a strong supporter that it was perfectly legal to regain from Spain, what was stolen from him.

This was the beginning of England's policy towards Spain in the New World.

In 1570 Drake sailed again to the Caribbean. This time with men and armed vessels. Drake captured the town of Nombre de Dios, a port town on the Atlantic Ocean side of Panama, only ten miles east of Porto Bello. Drake sacked and explored towns all around the area called the Darien, which is now the eastern most province of Panama. Drake explored the Darien by land and was shown the route to the Pacific side of the isthmus by the natives. Drake swore he would be the first Englishman to sail the Pacific coast of this land.¹⁰ That honor, however, would belong to one of Drake's commanders.

In 1575 John Oxenham would raise a fleet of his own and sail to the Darien. Once there he rejoined with the Cimarrones, or run away black slaves who established small colonies in the Darien. Drake and Oxenham established relations with this group on their previous voyages to the Darien. The Cimarrones, or Maroons, as they were called by the English, would conduct raids of any Spanish outpost that presented itself as an opportunity. Oxenham used the Maroons to guide him across the jungles of Panama to the Pacific. Once on the Pacific side, Oxenham constructed a small boat, and mounted two guns on it that his men transported across the isthmus. Oxenham floated his little boat out into the Pacific Ocean and positioned himself to ambush ships heading into Panama City. Oxenham captured several unarmed ships. The ships were loaded with treasure on their way to Panama from Ecuador and Peru. The ships were not armed and

were completely surprised because they had never before experienced any threat in this area.¹¹

Once back on land, the situation began to go astray. Oxenham let his Spanish prisoners go, which aggravated the Cimarrones who wanted the prisoners. Oxenham's own men began to quarrel about the division of the loot. The Governor, or the President of the Audencia of Panama, sent soldiers to hunt down the English Pirates. Oxenham's crew was discovered and slaughtered. All of the men were killed except Oxenham and a few others who were sent to Panama City as prisoners. The prisoners were executed in Panama City, except Oxenham and three others, who were sent to Lima, Peru to stand trial. Oxenham was executed in 1580. The only survivors of his expedition are believed to be a few ship boys, who were probably sold as slaves.¹² This was the first time an Englishman sailed in the Pacific Ocean and the first time piracy came to Panama City.

From 1577 to 1580 Drake sailed around the world sacking unprotected cities in Chile, Peru, and the coast of Mexico. Drake sailed as far north as California before returning to England around Africa. When he returned to England with ships full of Spanish gold, and valuables, he was treated to a hero's welcome. Queen Elizabeth made him a knight of the realm. This angered King Philip of Spain who saw the actions of Drake as nothing more than piracy. The example of Sir Francis Drake encouraged other Englishmen to rob Spanish ships, and bring the gold to England and to Queen Elizabeth. The act of piracy was now the tactic the English would use against the Spanish. Piracy could now be made legal by obtaining a license, or a commission from any government representative.¹³

Pirates with a license to rob were called privateers. A privateer was an armed vessel, and or, captain and crew, commissioned to capture a merchant vessel or port of a hostile nation.¹⁴ Privateering allowed Sir Francis Drake to legally raid Spanish Cities in the New World. By weakening the Spanish claim abroad, Sir Francis Drake would weaken the Spanish at home. This was extremely important to his Queen and his country but also made Drake a very wealthy man.

Drake wasted no time in continuing his quest for wealth. He returned to the Caribbean where he planned to attack Santo Domingo, Cartagena, and Panama. These three expeditions were of a grand scale never before seen in the West Indies or Caribbean. Both expeditions resembled a military campaign rather than an act of piracy. Drake sailed to Hispaniola first to capture the city of Santo Domingo. Drake landed forces ten miles away from the city at night, and while they moved into position to assault the city, Drake conducted a feint landing on the opposite side of the city. Drake's main force was able to secure the city rapidly. Drake divided the town into sections he could defend and demanded a large ransom for the release of the town. When Drake sent a messenger under a flag of truce, the Spanish wounded him and made him crawl back to Drake. Drake became furious, and when the messenger died, Drake hung two friars and promised to hang more if his demands were not met. The Spanish soon met Drake's demands.¹⁵

With his force well equipped, Drake then headed towards Cartagena. The City of Cartagena was one of the most fortified cities in the Caribbean. The terrain around the harbor consisted of many natural barriers that allowed for the city to be well protected. Drake was very familiar with the harbor, from his previous trips to Cartagena, as a slave

trader under Sir John Hawkins. Drake knew that there were two ways for ships to enter the harbor of Cartagena that helped protect the city. Drake sailed his ships through the larger of the two openings. Drake dismounted forces and attacked the city by land at night from several directions. The force was too overwhelming for the defenders who were pushed back into the city. With most of the Spanish military leaders killed during the attack, the Spanish were no longer capable of resisting.¹⁶

Drake's original plan was to capture and hold the city and use it as a logistics base to launch more raids. Drake was forced to reevaluate his plans, due to his reduction of forces, from the hard fighting, and loss of men from yellow fever. Drake and his commanders decided that they did not have sufficient force to remain, and no longer had enough force to go ahead with the attempt to capture Panama. Drake agreed and after demanding a large ransom for the city, he returned home to England.¹⁷

It was not long after Drake returned home that Queen Elizabeth appointed him to command the English fleet to stop the Spanish from invading England. Drake took to the offensive and attacked Spanish ports to destroy the logistics base that would be required for the Spanish to invade mainland England. In July 1588, Drake sailed against the Spanish Armada and halted the King of Spain's plan to invade England.

Drake sailed for the last time to the Caribbean in 1595 with his long time friend Sir John Hawkins. This was the last voyage for both men. Hawkins died off the coast of Puerto Rico in November, and in January, 1596 Sir Francis Drake died off the coast of Panama. Drake was given a burial at sea the town of Porto Bello. The death of Drake marked only the beginning of piracy towards Spain in the new world. More ruthless men

would follow, and seventy years later, a man named Henry Morgan, would capture both Porto Bello and Panama.

The next key pirate in the evolution of piracy, was a man named Jean-David Nau, better known as L'Olonnois. L'Olonnois was not the English gentleman that Drake was, he was ruthless and cruel, but his tactics were often successful. L'Olonnois was born in France and came to the Caribbean as a servant. After serving three years as a servant, L'Olonnois then moved to Hispaniola where he became a buccaneer.¹⁸

L'Olonnois served first as a mariner on board several pirate vessels. L'Olonnois had a reputation for being extremely brave, this reputation helped him earn his own ship from the Governor of Tortuga. L'Olonnois set out in the early 1630's to earn his fortune. On his first voyage he lost his ship due to a storm. The entire crew survived the storm and were washed ashore on the coast of Campeche. Once on shore L'Olonnois and his men were hunted down by Spanish soldiers. Most of his men were killed, and L'Olonnois was badly wounded. L'Olonnois hid among his dead men to escape the Spanish soldiers. Believed to be dead, L'Olonnois used this to his advantage and after escaping planned to attack a small trading post in Cuba.¹⁹

Prior to reaching Cuba, it was discovered by the people on the island, that L'Olonnois was alive and was going to attack. The Spanish were more determined than ever to kill this pirate. Gun boats and soldiers were sent to meet him, and more importantly a hang man was identified for the execution of L'Olonnois. L'Olonnois defeated the ships and soldiers sent to stop him. He tortured and murdered all who opposed him. L'Olonnois made a promise to himself after this attack, to never give

quarter to a Spaniard. This was the philosophy that would guide the life of one of the most brutal pirates ever known.²⁰

For his next prize L'Olonnois sailed to Maracaibo, a port town of Venezuela. Here L'Olonnois captured a Spanish ship full of gold and silver. This was his first big success. L'Olonnois headed back to Tortuga a famous pirate and began to build a fleet capable of seizing even bigger prizes.²¹

Once back in Tortuga the fame of L'Olonnois made it possible for him to recruit many courageous men for his upcoming quests. L'Olonnois established a fleet of over four hundred men and once again set sail. After a few small raids on ships off the coast of Puerto Rico, L'Olonnois turned south to the coast of Venezuela. The objective was to capture the city of Maracaibo. L'Olonnois first captured the small forts which defended the city from a land assault. He was able to then go into the city unopposed. All the soldiers and the people of the city ran and hid with all of their valuables instead of defending their city. L'Olonnois tortured all he captured to make them speak of the location of others and their riches. His brutal torturing was effective and caused distrust among the remaining few able to hide. The next objective was to capture the city of Gibraltar.²²

Gibraltar was prepared to defend it against the pirates. All land routes to the city were blocked by obstacles of cut trees. All approaches by water were covered by guns. The defenses were strong but the will to take the city by the pirates was also strong. L'Olonnois used prisoners to guide his forces by land, but along every approach he met strong obstacles. L'Olonnois inspired his men to attack by telling them that they could

either fight, or die at the hands of the Spanish soldiers. His men agreed to attack.

L'Olonnois' last words to his men were, "Tis well; but know ye, withal, that the first man who shall show any fear, or at the least apprehension thereof, I will pistol him with my own hands."²³

L'Olonnois himself led the attack, but his men were unable to penetrate the strong Spanish defense. After several failed attempts, L'Olonnois tried another strategy to deceive the Spanish. L'Olonnois ordered his men to retreat in plain view of the Spanish. This tricked the defenders that the pirates were fleeing. The Spanish now attempted a disordered pursuit of the pirates. This was what L'Olonnois had hoped for. With the Spanish now out from their defenses, L'Olonnois could now maneuver his forces against them. L'Olonnois and his men quickly exploited their advantage and were able to kill many Spanish soldiers. The rest of the Spanish force fled into the woods and gave the city to the pirates. After his victory, L'Olonnois returned to Tortuga and began to make plans for his second voyage.²⁴

The objective of L'Olonnois second voyage would be the coast of Nicaragua. His plan was to pillage as many towns as he could along the coast. L'Olonnois set sail for the coast of Nicaragua but due to weather was forced to land in the Gulf of Honduras. Here L'Olonnois captured whatever he could. He attacked Spanish outposts and tortured and murdered anyone who would not give him information to the location of larger riches. He soon discovered a city named San Pedro. L'Olonnois was desperate to find a way into San Pedro and around the Spanish ambushes that awaited him. He tortured every prisoner, but no one knew of a way. With his patience tested and his temper raging,

L'Olonnois committed the most brutal act of his life. In front of all the prisoners and in front of all his men L'Olonnois showed how brutal he could be. He pulled out his cutlass and with it cut open the breast of one Spaniard and pulled out his heart and began to gnaw at it saying, "I will serve you all alike if you show me not another way."²⁵

Another way to the city was shown to L'Olonnois, but it proved too difficult. L'Olonnois was forced to take the city by a frontal assault. The frontal assault worked, and L'Olonnois was able to capture the city. Not known to L'Olonnois at the time, was that he had reduced the defending force significantly when the Spanish tried to ambush him along the way to the city.²⁶

The pirates remained in the city for several months before deciding to go to Guatemala. When L'Olonnois decided to go to Guatemala as his next objective, half of his men did not wish to follow. Over half of his force returned to Tortuga. L'Olonnois and the remainder of his force remained in Honduras when their ship became stuck in a sand bar off the coast. Several attempts were made to free their large ship from the coast, but were not successful. Finally he was forced to build smaller boats from the wood of his own ship. L'Olonnois took a small force in order to attempt the capture of some larger Spanish vessels to free the remainder of his force. L'Olonnois was met by a large force of Spanish and Indians, and barely escaped. L'Olonnois decided to take his small fleet down the coast of Colombia to search for vessels.

L'Olonnois sailed down the coast of Central America and landed in the Darien, which is east of the port city of Porto Bello in Panama. Here L'Olonnois met the Indians of the Darien that the Spanish call Bravos, for their inability to civilize them. The

reputation of L'Olonnois preceded him to the Darien. The Indians of this area wanted nothing to do with the likes of the Spanish or the pirates. The Indians attacked and killed L'Olonnois' small force and captured L'Olonnois himself. The Indians dismembered the body of L'Olonnois, burned it, and spread his parts and ashes as far apart as could be. This was done so that no trace or memory of the terrible pirate would remain.²⁷

The life of the cruelest pirate ended in a cruel way. L'Olonnois practiced brutal methods that were even too cruel for his own kind, and in the end left him without a force willing to follow. Men followed L'Olonnois early in his career because he was successful and they knew he would make them rich. Men were not loyal to him, they fought because that is what they signed on to do, and they knew their efforts would lead to booty. The methods L'Olonnois practiced in Nicaragua shook the faith in his men. It was not a question of morals, it was a question of life or death. L'Olonnois was proving to be someone who would lead them into an unsuccessful fight, he allowed his hatred towards the Spanish to decide his actions.

Somewhere in the career of L'Olonnois, his objective shifted from wealth, to destruction of the Spanish. Killing did not bother the buccaneers that signed on to follow, but the real objective for every buccaneer was money. This shift of objectives, from money, to killing Spanish to get money, was a serious fault in the leadership of L'Olonnois. In all his battles L'Olonnois was a fearless leader. He always led by example, it was his brutal examples however, that proved to the buccaneers that L'Olonnois was not the leader to follow.

The successes of Drake and L'Olonnois are examples of how piracy evolved in the New World. More and more the Spanish were beginning to realize that they were unable to protect their vast empire. Spain's inability to protect her large empire led to more and more attacks from pirates to gain fame and fortune. At the same time a struggle was underway from other countries who also sought an empire in the New World. Conflict erupted between countries seeking an empire and Spain. Spain still possessed the world's strongest navy and army. No other country in Europe could extend her navy or army so far away from home, and still be able to maintain the security of their mainland. New tactics would have to be thought of to weaken the Spanish hold on the New World.

The English were able to capture Jamaica from Spain in 1655. Spain never made any serious attempts to recapture the island since there was no longer any gold or silver on Jamaica. The strategic importance of Jamaica was not apparent to the Spanish. The Spanish overlooked how important Jamaica could be to the enemies of Spain. It was from Jamaica, that privateering licenses could be obtained to attack Spanish sea ports and vessels. Jamaica became a safe haven for buccaneers and served as a logistics base for pirates.²⁸

Privateering as an occupation began to grow rapidly due to the masses of men migrating to the New World and the lack of honest work. This group became known as pirates, privateers, or buccaneers. They were a colorful group of men, hard, tough and ruthless. A young man named Henry Morgan came to Jamaica in 1655, he was a young soldier on the English expedition to capture the island, almost twenty years would pass

before he would return to his home. On Jamaica, Morgan evolved to become one of the toughest leaders of the buccaneers, the conqueror of Panama, and a knight of the realm.

¹Russell R. Hart, *Admirals of the Caribbean* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1922), 1.

²*Ibid.*, 2.

³*Ibid.*, 3.

⁴Captain James Burney, *History of the Buccaneers of America* (London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., 1891), 7-34.

⁵Peter Gerhard, *Pirates on the West Coast of New Spain, 1575-1742* (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1960), 22.

⁶Hart, 11.

⁷Gerhard, 26.

⁸Peter R. Galvin, *The Pirates Wake: A Geography of Piracy and Pirates as Geographers in Colonial Spanish America, 1536-1718*, 2 vols. (Ann Harbor: The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1992), 42.

⁹Hart, 14.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 23-41.

¹¹Gerhard, 58-60.

¹²*Ibid.*, 58-60.

¹³David Cordingly, *Pirates, Terror on the High Seas-from the Caribbean to the South China Sea* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, Inc. 1996), 8-33.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁵Hart, 23-41.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 33-34.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 36-39.

¹⁸Howard Pyle, *The Buccaneers and Marooners of America* (Ann Arbor: Gryphon Books, 1971), 95.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 95-96.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 96-98.

²¹*Ibid.*, 98-99.

²²*Ibid.*, 104-106.

²³Hart, 108.

²⁴Pyle, 109-114.

²⁵Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 135.

²⁶Pyle, 118-119.

²⁷Exquemelin, 150.

²⁸Alec Moncreith, "Besieged by Thieves," *Military History* 3 (August 1991) : 44-49.

CHAPTER 3

HENRY MORGAN

Henry Morgan was born in Whales in 1635. Not much is known about his childhood. Most accounts claim that Morgan's father was a farmer or a yeoman and owned his own land. Sometime in Morgan's youth he began to feel that he did not want to follow the footsteps of his father. Morgan's Uncles were military men, and it was the military calling that young Henry Morgan wished to pursue. Most accounts written about Morgan tell a very different story of his youth and how Henry Morgan came to the Caribbean. It is important to understand both versions of Morgan's youth to understand the history of Henry Morgan.

The most popular version of Morgan's youth claims that he ran away from home around the age of fourteen. After running away from home, the young Morgan went to the coastal towns to try to find his calling in life. Young Henry Morgan wanted to sail on the huge ships he saw in the port towns of Whales. He eventually accepted employment on a ship bound for Barbados.¹ Morgan sailed with the ship to Barbados. When the ship reached Barbados, the young Henry Morgan was sold as a servant by the Captain of the ship.² Slavery was a common practice, Europeans or white slaves were normally sold into slavery for a period of time and were called indentured servants. English servants normally worked for seven years to obtain their freedom. French servants normally worked for three years.³ Black slaves from Africa were sold for life.

The claim that young Henry was a slave came from a book written by a former pirate who sailed with Morgan. Several years after Morgan's attack on Panama, the pirate who was a Frenchman named Exquemelin wrote a book about buccaneers; a large portion of this book was about the life and conquest of Henry Morgan. Exquemelin painted Morgan as a ruthless pirate, a boy sold as an indentured servant who later became the leader of the buccaneers. Exquemelin was himself a buccaneer and participated in the many tales he wrote about; he was with Morgan in Panama. Exquemelin's book is a detailed first hand account of many adventures of the buccaneers. Exquemelin's book is known by anyone who has studied the history of piracy and Henry Morgan. The book was a great contribution to history. When the book was published in 1678, it was an instant success. The book was not translated into English until 1684, but the success of the book continued to grow. It was a definite best seller for several years, but parts of the book are simply not true.

When the book was released, Morgan was outraged and sued the publishers for libel. Morgan settled the matter out of court and subsequent editions of the book were amended.⁴ Unfortunately for Morgan, the incorrect version continued to circulate. Morgan claimed that he was never a servant to anyone, except to his majesty. Morgan instead insisted that he came to Jamaica as a young soldier in 1655 when the English took the island from the Spanish. This is the true version; however, most versions of Exquemelin's book in print today still have the original passage claiming Morgan had been an indentured servant. Almost all historical writings about Henry Morgan describe him as being an indentured servant in his youth. It is a matter of historical record that

Morgan clearly won his libel suit in the King's Bench Court against two publishing companies. The remaining evidence supporting Morgan's version of his life can be found only through detailed research of records in England and Jamaica. Only recently released accounts of his life tell the true story. It is easy to see how so many accounts about Henry Morgan use the version of his youth as told by Exquemelin. The dispute between Morgan and Exquemelin would be better served by a separate thesis and will not be totally settled here. It is important to this thesis though, to understand a little about both versions in order to understand the background of Henry Morgan.

Exquemelin's version about Morgan's youth is not true. The events that occur later in Morgan's life however, are true, as told by Exquemelin. Morgan only took offense with the unpopular passages of Exquemelin's book. Morgan was born in Wales in 1635, either in the village of Penkarn, Monmouthshire or Llaanrhymny in Glamorganshire. Later in his life Morgan named one of his estates Llanrhymany after the Welsh village.⁵ His father was most likely Robert Morgan, a wealthy land owner and distinguished gentleman. Morgan had two uncles who were known to be distinguished soldiers, one was Major General Sir Thomas Morgan, the other was Colonel Edward Morgan. Colonel Edward Morgan was briefly the Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica and was killed in action in the Caribbean. Morgan did come to Jamaica, as he claimed he did, with the English military in 1655.⁶

Morgan left school to become a soldier and follow the foot steps of his uncles. He joined the expeditionary force under the command of General Venables and Admiral Penn. The force sailed from Britain in 1654 to capture the island of Hispaniola. Morgan

wrote later in his life, "I left school too young to be a great proficient in that or other laws, and have been more used to the pike than the book."⁷

Morgan learned many hard lessons on his first expedition. The British force numbered over seven thousand. Their objective was to capture Hispaniola by landing at Santa Domingo, but it was a complete failure. The Landing force was met by strong Spanish resistance and was forced to withdraw. The expedition failed due to the strong resistance they faced, but also due to poor leadership and the effects of the tropics on the soldiers who were not acclimatized. The commanders of the expedition decided instead to attack Jamaica which did not possess the defenses that Santa Domingo did. The small Spanish garrison in Jamaica was easily captured by the large invading force. Jamaica gave England her first claim in the New World. This was a small tactical victory, but a very significant strategic victory that neither the Spanish nor the English totally understood at the time.⁸

Jamaica quickly became a settlement for the Royal Navy and for privateers. Morgan spent his early years in Jamaica participating in raids on Spanish settlements in Central America. Morgan served as a captain under Captain Myngs on two raids in Central America.⁹ Morgan was successful and learned many lessons from his early days.

The other story of Morgan's youth brings Morgan to Jamaica in a very different way. Exquemelin's story is that Morgan was an indentured servant in Barbados for seven years, the story is base on some truth, many buccaneers came to Jamaica this way. If Morgan was a servant he would have served seven years as a slave. At that time, white slaves, or indentured servants, were often treated poorly, slave holders treated black

slaves slightly better than whites since white slave were not permanent property. White slaves were especially harshly treated near the end of their term, often not being clothed and fed.¹⁰ Morgan was supposed to have worked as a farm hand, the same job he ran away from home not to do. Accounts vary as to how Morgan was treated as a slave, but all the accounts blame the lessons learned during this period as to why Morgan became a pirate. Around the age of twenty one, Morgan would have earned his freedom after seven years as a slave. Once he was free, he moved to Jamaica, or so the story goes as told by Exquemelin.

The story continues in Jamaica, with young Morgan looking for an occupation. Finding none he joined a group of young buccaneers. Buccaneering is a name given to an old occupation of making beef boucan; beef cut into strips, salted and dried in the sun. Jamaica was the perfect place for the buccaneers. Large herds of cattle roamed free from the days of Spanish occupation. The buccaneers would live off the land while they hunted as many cattle as they could. The buccaneer needed to be an excellent shot with a musket, to shoot the cattle at long range, and be able to sustain himself in the field.¹¹ The buccaneer profession did exist on the island but Henry Morgan was never one, but he would become the leader of many buccaneers.

The slave version as told by Exquemelin does somewhat fit the time line of Morgan's arrival to Jamaica. If Morgan was a slave for seven years he would have arrived in the island around 1656 or 1657, one or two years after the English captured the island. This did not happen, Morgan arrived in 1655 as part of the British Expedition under General Venables and Admiral Penn.

The story of the buccaneers in Jamaica is true and is tied to Henry Morgan. Numerous ships would stop in Jamaica before returning to Europe. Buccaneers would sell large quantities of beef to ships who needed a food supply for the long return voyage. This buccaneer business of selling beef was beginning to cut into Spanish trade. The men who dried the beef, the buccaneers, were a tough unorganized lot. For many years the Spanish tried to rid themselves of the illegal competition of the buccaneer beef business. Finally, the Spanish were forced to begin selling their beef wholesale out of other ports to force the buccaneers out of business. Some of the young English and French buccaneers were forced by lack of work to move off Jamaica to the Island of Tortuga, off the north coast of Haiti. It was here, and in Jamaica that the buccaneers began to turn to privateering. Most owned their own musket and all were excellent shots, a skill they learned by shooting cattle on Jamaica.¹²

Henry Morgan began to hire some of these men for his crew. Morgan first served under Captain Myngs from 1655 through 1663 and was given a commission by the Governor of Jamaica to conduct raids against the Spanish.¹³ This would not have been true if Morgan had been a slave from Barbados. Morgan must have established himself very well on these early expeditions. Morgan's natural leadership, forceful personality, and ability to organize, began to gain him some fame as a military leader. Henry Morgan watched as the men he hired would squander their money once back in port. Morgan saved his money to help finance more raids at sea. His profits grew and Morgan began to buy land in Jamaica and plan for his future. Morgan planned and financed a small

campaign and hired buccaneers to sail with him. In 1663 Morgan was the Captain of his own small fleet.¹⁴

Morgan and his crew sailed first to the coast of Campeche in search of Spanish wealth. In his late twenties Captain Morgan quickly established himself as one of the best in the business. After two years at sea with his own ship, Captain Morgan returned to Jamaica with six Spanish ships filled with gold and valuables.

Morgan's duties as a captain of buccaneers are great. The men that Captain Morgan lead were tough dishonest men that would rob or kill a person if they thought themselves physically capable of overcoming the opponent. There was more to being in charge than just owning the ship or possessing a commission. To lead buccaneers a Captain had to be respected by his crew and respect from buccaneers did not come easily. The crew followed a Captain only if there was money to be made. Morgan established himself among the men that followed him because he was a leader. Morgan was smarter, he was tougher, and he was ambitious. The reputation of Captain Morgan led to his recruitment by the most famous buccaneer of the time, Admiral Mansfield.

Mansfield offered Morgan the post of second-in-command if Morgan would combine his force for an operation Admiral Mansfield was planning. Mansfield was the Admiral of the Brethren of the Coast. The Brethren of the Coast was an organization of pirates, privateers, and buccaneers that formed when the buccaneers were put out of business. This association later became known as the buccaneers.¹⁵ The operation Mansfield was planning called for the capture of the small Spanish port on the island of Santa Catalina. This island is known today as San Andres about 100 miles east of

Nicaragua.¹⁶ The capture of this port would give Mansfield a stronghold and allow him to increase trade in the Caribbean. This was the first large scale military operation that the young Captain Morgan participated in.

Morgan and Mansfield attacked and captured the Spanish island of Santa Catalina. This was the first time Morgan saw how effective a ground force was in capturing a port city. The attack was conducted by dismounting a significant force able to overthrow the garrison. The landing and the movement of Morgan's force was conducted at night. This was Morgan's first application of combat power, and it was successful. After the garrison was defeated, Mansfield left a garrison of one hundred men to hold the island.

Many lessons were learned by the young Captain Morgan on this first voyage with Mansfield. The most important lesson that Morgan learned, was how to plan large military operations. Morgan began to think on a much larger scale. Morgan learned that the planning and execution of a large operation is more difficult, but the payoff, if planned correctly was worth the difficulty.

After Santa Catalina was safely captured Morgan and Mansfield headed back out to sea to rob and pillage towns along the coast from Costa Rica to Panama. The fleet first stopped in Porto Bello to release their prisoners that the Spanish had taken in Santa Catalina. From Porto Bello the crew headed toward other villages in Panama and Costa Rica. Most of the villages were informed of their coming however by the Governor of Panama. Knowing that the Governor of Panama would send forces, Mansfield decided to retreat back to Santa Catalina. This was Morgan's first experience with Panama.¹⁷

Upon returning to Santa Catalina, Mansfield finds the garrison in good order. Mansfield's plan now calls for a bigger garrison to defend his island from the Spanish. Mansfield then departed for Jamaica to sell the governor there on his plan. The Governor of Jamaica is not receptive to Mansfield's plan. The governor had the power to sanction the plan, which would have made it legal in the eyes of England. The governor did not see this expedition to be in the best interest of the King and would not grant Mansfield permission to recruit from Jamaica. The governor also felt that Jamaica required all the defenses it had and could not spare the loss of any garrison. Mansfield became disgusted by the resistance of the governor and left Jamaica.

Mansfield departed for Tortuga to recruit the men he would need to defend his Island. Morgan remained in Jamaica to begin establishing business deals for trade. This plan stood to make both men extremely wealthy.

While in Tortuga, Mansfield died suddenly from fever. Before any reinforcements were sent, the Spanish recapture Santa Catalina. In Jamaica, Captain Morgan had already sent a ship full of reinforcements to Santa Catalina. Morgan was unable to stop the ship and upon arriving to Santa Catalina they were all captured by the Spanish who now owned the island.

With the death of Admiral Mansfield, Captain Morgan, at the young age of thirty is now in charge of a fleet consisting of twelve ships and over seven hundred men. Morgan began a plan on where to strike with his large force of sailor soldiers. He made a plan for Havana, Cuba but after careful study of the defenses of the city, he rejected the

idea. Morgan decided instead on taking the port city of Puerto Principe on the southern coast of Cuba.

The town of Puerto Principe lay inland on the island of Cuba and most likely had not been molested by pirates. Morgan figured that if the village had not been molested previously, then it stood to reason, that the people in the city possessed some very expensive valuables. This was Morgan's first large scale operation that he planned by himself. The fact that the city lay so far inland proposed some serious challenges for Morgan. Morgan needed to plan to maneuver his force to the objective.

Morgan's plan called for simply taking the road to Puerto Principe and capturing the city by surprise. Morgan rationalized that the town would not be expecting them and therefore would not have enough time to establish a defense. Unfortunately for Morgan, the day before the attack the people in the town learned that Morgan was coming. A prisoner on board Morgan's fleet overheard the plans to attack and escaped to inform the town.¹⁸

The village did the best they could to prepare a defense. Trees were cut along the road to slow the approach of the attackers. Ambushes were placed along the approach to reduce the force prior to reaching the town. The town itself was defended by over four hundred people. When Morgan discovered the obstacles he knew the town was alerted to his coming. With surprise lost, the town would have prepared positions to fight. Morgan also knew the town would spend most, if not all the preparation time, hiding their valuables, making it difficult for Morgan and his men to capture.

The obstacles in the road forced Morgan to spread his force and maneuver his men through the woods. By using the woods, Morgan maneuvered around the planned ambushes that were set for him. The defenders did not locate their ambushes to support their obstacles. Morgan was able to reach the city undetected and maneuver his force against an area of weakness of the defenders.

The defenders of the town attacked with mounted cavalry, which the pirates calmly reacted to. Morgan's men positioned themselves in semi-circle formations and were able to successfully apply firepower onto the charging horses. The well aimed shots of the steady pirates reduced the enemy rapidly. With most of the enemy killed, Morgan's pirates were quickly able to overwhelm the town. This was Morgan's second application of combat power, and it was a tactical success.¹⁹

Morgan was successful in the capture of the city, but the people in the town were able to hide most of their valuables. Morgan and his men tortured the people of the town and demanded a heavy ransom. Demanding ransom for a town was nothing new, Francis Drake had done it successfully, but Drake did not use the methods of torture that Morgan's men did. After several days of tormenting and torturing the citizens of the town, Morgan is able to drain all the valuables from the people, but the amount does not equal the ransom demanded by Morgan. Morgan agrees to allow several men to leave the town to search for someone to pay his demands. The men return empty handed, but Morgan intercepts a letter to the town telling them to hold out and not to give in. Morgan learns from the note that Spanish soldiers are on the way to destroy him and free the town. Morgan gives his prisoners one more day to pay the ransom or he will burn their

town. Knowing that they cannot pay, and that he cannot wait any longer, Morgan agrees to accept 500 cattle as ransom.²⁰

As the cattle were being prepared and the ships were being loaded, a fight breaks out between two men of Morgan's crew. The fight was between a Frenchman and an Englishman. The Englishman killed the Frenchman from behind as they prepared to duel. All the Frenchmen in Morgan's fleet protested and demanded revenge. Morgan calmed the situation by taking the Englishman prisoner and promising the entire crew that the prisoner would be brought to justice in Jamaica. Upon the return of Morgan's fleet to Jamaica, the English pirate was hung. This act boosted Morgan's reputation as a fair leader.²¹

Morgan's first expedition was successful in taking a city, but finding the money proved to be a little more difficult than expected. Morgan would apply the lessons he learned at Puerto Principe in his next operation.

Back in Jamaica, after a successful raid, the pirates squandered their money as Morgan planned for his next target. Morgan meets with Governor Modyford, the Governor of Jamaica, who would sanction his next operation. Governor Modyford was the English throne in Jamaica and could grant Morgan the privateering license he would need to make his actions legal. Modyford was able to approve Morgan's operations by declaring that Spain somehow had plans of attacking a holding or settlement of the English throne. This gave Modyford the authority to approve actions against Spanish holdings. Modyford received a fee for the license and a huge portion of Morgan's prize.

This arrangement allowed Morgan to act under English authority and made his actions a military operation against an enemy of the throne instead of an act of piracy.²²

Morgan learned many lessons from his early exploits. He has seen how the Spanish will fight to protect a city. How the Spanish mass their infantry and cavalry making easy targets for his expert shooters. Morgan also learned he could avoid prepared defenses if he could achieve surprise and maneuver his force into an area of weakness. With these lessons in mind, Morgan began to plan for his next operation.

Complete surprise would be necessary on his next undertaking. Morgan persuades Modyford to allow him to attack the port city of Porto Bello on the Atlantic coast of Panama. Porto Bello is the third most defended city after Havana and Cartagena. In 1668 Morgan leaves Jamaica with eight ships and four hundred men. The only one on board that knows the destination this time is Morgan himself. Morgan waits until he is off the coast of Costa Rica before he shares his plans with his captains.²³

Morgan's captains did not believe the city could be taken and suggested an easier target. Morgan faced the most serious leadership challenge of his career. The crew believed that they did not have sufficient men to take the city. Morgan would have to convince his men that the operation would be successful, that Porto Bello could be taken.

Morgan gathered all the fleet and gave a convincing speech that his plan would work. He told them, "If our number is small, our hearts are great. And the fewer persons we are, the more union and better shares we shall have in the spoil."²⁴ Morgan's plan called for night landing of all forces and to move by land at night to reach the city before morning. Morgan explained to his men that the defenses at Porto Bello were made to

defend against an assault from the sea. If Morgan and his men could keep their ships out of sight and move by land around the city, they could attack the city where the defenses were the weakest. Morgan's confidence and his knowledge of the defenses of the city convinced his men that they could capture the city.

Morgan anchored his ships well west of Porto Bello and left only enough crew on board to bring the ships forward, when needed to load the riches, Morgan was sure they would capture.²⁵ Morgan landed his force by using canoes to move along the coast until they were three miles from the city.²⁶ After successfully landing his men, Morgan then moved his men across the jungle at night to close in on the city. The distance Morgan actually traveled by land differs in many historical accounts. One account claims that he traveled over forty miles by land.²⁷ The shortest, and probably the more accurate account, claims that Morgan and his men moved only a little over three miles.

The terrain around Porto Bello supports the shorter route. The water and the terrain surrounding Porto Bello, allowed the city to be easily defended from a frontal attack by sea. The land also permitted ships to easily get close to the shore without being seen, and dismount cargo or personnel within only a couple of miles east or west of the city. The proof of the shorter distance Morgan traveled is in the time it took him to make the move. All historical accounts claim that it only took Morgan one night to make the move to the city. Moving at night in the jungle is extremely difficult and time consuming. It would have taken Morgan and four hundred men several hours to walk three miles in the jungle.

Morgan anchored his ships on the coast well west of the city, then moved his force using canoes until they were about three miles from the city. Around Midnight Morgan beached the canoes and began the foot movement towards the town. To achieve surprise Morgan would not have exposed his fleet to any other port town. Study of the terrain of Morgan's approach support the three mile distance.²⁸ From walking the terrain it is easy to see how accounts would vary. Some accounts claim that Morgan took the canoes down a river for thirty miles before walking. The rivers in the area do not support a movement of this type. The rivers all run parallel to the city. Three miles at night through thick jungle must have seemed like walking over forty miles, it is easy to see how men themselves could have told a tale describing the distance as being much farther than it was. Morgan used pirates who were once prisoners at Porto Bello to assist him in navigating his crew by land. The move was difficult and took most of the night but Morgan and his men were able to reach the city just as it was beginning to get light.

The city of Porto Bello was divided into three separate forts. There was one fort on each side of the bay, the larger of the two was on the town side of the bay. The third fort was under construction at the actual port. Morgan needed to capture them all quickly before the city could wake up and organize any resistance. Morgan and his men were able to quickly capture a guard who led them into the city. Morgan's men then moved in on the garrison of soldiers in one of the three forts that guarded the city. The soldiers in the fort would not surrender and the fighting that began woke up the town and alerted them to the attacking pirates. The mayor of the town attempted to rally a defense but the people were confused and terrified and began hiding their valuables.²⁹

Morgan now grew very upset that his plan was being stalled, he pushed his men to quickly overwhelm the soldiers in the first fort, which was the half completed fort, named San Geronimo. Once Morgan and his men occupied the first fort, Morgan ordered all the Spanish soldiers to be placed in a single room and then blew up the room and most of the fort. Morgan and his men soon owned most of the town.³⁰

The second fort was named Santiago Castle, and was a well defended fort able to place fire on Morgan's men moving through the town. Morgan's men attempted to burn the fort by setting fire to the doors and creating a breach. The Spanish defenders countered by reinforcing the doors with stones that protected the doors. Morgan's men were not able to get close enough to place the fire where it might do some good.³¹

Morgan's advance and attempts to sack Porto Bello were halted. He owned the city but the Spanish owned the fort that controlled the city. The Spanish captain in charge of artillery of the fort created a strong defense and Morgan was unsure of what to do next. Morgan faced his most difficult tactical challenge ever. If he advanced his men against the fort he would most surely lose. To Morgan, the thought of leaving and not winning was not an option, but he needed an advantage to motivate his men to overcome the strong Spanish defense. Morgan had placed a small force on top of the hill overlooking the town and the fort. The buccaneers were able to place effective fire into the fort and gave Morgan the advantage he needed. Morgan's men were now determined to finish the plan.

Morgan now organized his men for an assault on Santiago Castle. After several attempts Morgan could see that there was no approach to the fort that was not covered by

fire from the Spanish soldiers. Morgan decided to construct ladders large enough for three men to climb at the same time.³² His plan was to assault over the side of the fort with the ladders, but he still faced the challenge of getting the ladders in place. Morgan reorganized his assault force. He ordered that the mayor, several women, old men, priests, and nuns be placed at the head of the assault that would allow Morgan to place the ladders to scale the walls of the fort. Morgan thought for sure that the Catholic soldiers inside would not fire their weapons at the clergymen and women in the front of the attack. Morgan informed the captain defending the fort of his plan and asked him to surrender. The captain replied that he would never surrender alive.³³

As Morgan approached the fort his men were met by fire. The soldiers from the castle fired a cannon loaded with chain shot, killing one of Morgan's men and wounding two priests.³⁴ Only one volley was fired, and Morgan's men reached the gate of the castle. Morgan and his men were surprised that the Spanish fired on the priests and nuns. Using the clergymen and women for cover allowed Morgan's men to place the ladders on the walls and penetrate the fort. Once inside the fort the pirates were quickly able to defeat the defenders. Most of the soldiers inside the fort surrendered. The captain of artillery continued to attempt to rally his men to fight. Morgan's men were able to corner the him in the fort and demand his surrender. The captain simply replied, "I had rather die as a valiant soldier than be hanged a coward."³⁵ The pirates respected his courage but were forced to kill him. With the taking of Santiago Castle, the entire city now belonged to Morgan, but he did not yet take the third fort on the other side of the bay. The assault that began shortly before dawn was over by early afternoon.

The next morning Morgan sent a force across the bay to capture San Felipe Castle, the third fort. The men inside had plenty of ammunition but had no food. The fort was supplied every day by the town. Morgan maneuvered his men around the fort from the east. Morgan took position on the high ground overlooking the fort. The commander of the fort refused to surrender. The fight for the fort lasted several hours, until some of Morgan's men were able to sneak inside the fort while the officers of the fort were arguing about rather to surrender or not. The garrison was quickly overrun and the fort soon surrendered.³⁶

Morgan's attack on Porto Bello was successful for several reasons. Morgan achieved tactical surprise by attacking at night and by approaching by land. Morgan applied correctly the elements of combat power. He maneuvered his force properly which allowed him to effectively mass his force against an area of enemy weakness. The route of approach also protected his force and enabled Morgan to arrive at Porto Bello with sufficient firepower to achieve victory. His leadership persuaded his men that the operation could be successful and gave them the confidence needed to carry it out. His leadership also motivated his men to continue even when things did not go according to plan.

Morgan's use of innocent civilians to lead the assault was perhaps a cowardly act, but the act suggests that Morgan understood his enemy and knew they would not fire on religious people. It also suggest that Morgan's objective was wealth, not territory, or military fame. Morgan did not respect the catholic religion of the Spanish, he thought

they were a bit fanatic, but he knew how important religion was to his enemy and most likely never expected the Spanish to fire on their own people.

Morgan and his men stayed in Porto Bello for several weeks following their attack, gutting the city of all valuables. Morgan demanded more money, and sent two prisoners to Panama City to demand money for the release of Porto Bello. Instead of paying the ransom, the governor of Panama sent troops to force Morgan out of Porto Bello. Learning of the approaching soldiers, Morgan sent a hundred pirates from the city to establish a strong defense along the approach route of the oncoming soldiers. Morgan's men used the terrain to their advantage and were able to quickly put down the rescue attempt by the governor.³⁷ Using maneuver and firepower, Morgan was able to stop a much larger force than his own. With his rescue attempt defeated the Governor of Panama decided to pay the ransom.

The Governor sent a message to Morgan asking him how he was able to take such a city as Porto Bello with such a small force? Morgan was amazed by the admiration the governor was showing him. Morgan sent a messenger to Panama with a pistol and a few small bullets. Morgan explained that the pistol is a sample of the arms which allowed him to capture Porto Bello. He asked the governor to hold onto the pistol for twelve months at which time Morgan would personally come to Panama to retrieve it. The governor sent a gold ring along with his reply telling Morgan not to bother coming to Panama. The governor told Morgan that he would never be able to take Panama as he did Porto Bello. Morgan left Porto Bello with some very interesting lessons about the defender of Panama City.

The capture of Porto Bello made Morgan famous among the pirates. In Jamaica, pirates from everywhere converged to join up with Morgan. Finding followers for his next operation was easy. One group of French pirates resisted the offer to join with Morgan. The French pirates possessed a large ship with many guns which Morgan wanted. Morgan invited all the officers of the ship to have dinner on board Morgan's ship with his officers. Once the Frenchmen were on board, Morgan took them all prisoners. Once the French officers were captured, Morgan then ordered his men to take the ship, which did not resist. As soon as Morgan's men possessed the French ship, they began to celebrate. The crew became drunk and began to fire the guns on the ship. Several hours after the pirates had seized the ship, a large explosion occurred, and the ship was blown to pieces in the harbor, killing over four hundred people on board.³⁸ What caused the explosion is not known. The pirates blamed the French, claiming that a few French prisoners on board set the charge to gain revenge on the pirates. The explosion simply may have been a terrible accident that was caused by the often deadly mixture of alcohol, men, and gun powder.³⁹

After the accident Morgan's force numbered slightly less than five hundred men and seven ships. Morgan's new plan was to sail for Colombia and take cities along the coast. One of Morgan's crew, was a French captain who had sailed with L'Olonnois when he captured Maracaibo. The French captain knew all the routes to the city and was able to convince Morgan to change his plans.⁴⁰

The city had been rebuilt since the attack by the pirate L'Olonnois. A fort protected the entrance to the bay north of the city itself. Morgan decided to take the fort

in a similar way that he took Porto Bello. Morgan sailed close to the city by night, but could not dismount his force until the early morning. The Spanish added another fort since L'Olonnois attacked the city. From this new fort, the Spanish were able to fire on Morgan's force as they loaded onto smaller boats and rowed towards land. Morgan's men approached by land but were met by Spanish soldiers along every route. Morgan was able to push to the fort but the defenders fought him all the way. It was not until after dark that Morgan's men were able to reach the fort.⁴¹

Upon reaching the fort, the pirates found that it was not defended. Morgan's lead forces quickly occupied the fort and sent word to Morgan of their success. When Morgan reached the fort he noticed that the Spanish placed charges of powder in the fort and that the fuse was burning. Morgan and his men had been tricked. Morgan was able to put out the fuse and then occupy the fort.⁴² The Spanish trick did not work, but it was a lesson that Morgan would never forget.

The next day Morgan decides to take his ships towards the city of Maracaibo which is located at the entrance of Lake Maracaibo. Morgan's ships were unable to sail across the bar into the lake because the water was too low. Instead Morgan decides to reach the city using smaller boats. Morgan's men arrive in the city and find it unprotected and almost totally deserted. All the wealthy citizens of the city fled leaving nothing for the pirates. The only people that remained were the poor who had nothing to lose. Morgan sends his men out into the surrounding area to search for the citizens of the city. Morgan and his men remained in the city for three weeks and were able to recover a great deal of riches from the city. Morgan then decides to capture the city of Gibraltar.⁴³

Morgan left the city of Maracaibo and sails for Gibraltar. Morgan did not leave any forces in the two forts he had already taken, nor did he leave anyone in the city of Maracaibo. By leaving the fort unattended, Morgan did not secure his escape route. Morgan would learn a valuable lesson from this mistake. Upon reaching Gibraltar, Morgan's fleet comes under fire from the Spanish defending the town. Morgan had hoped that the town would not resist, but found instead a determined force. Morgan had sent prisoners from Maracaibo to inform the city that he was on his way and would kill anyone who resisted. Morgan's warning did not persuade the town to surrender, Morgan was forced to take the city by force. The French captain was able to show Morgan an avenue towards the city that was unprotected by the Spanish.⁴⁴ Morgan learns again, that the Spanish soldiers will not defend against the more difficult approaches to their forts and cities. The Spanish assumed, incorrectly, that the route was too difficult for soldiers to pass. Morgan is able to maneuver his forces to apply firepower on an area of weakness of the enemy. As soon as the Spanish realized that they will soon be overwhelmed they flee the city and leave it to Morgan.⁴⁵

Morgan and his men begin to search for all the riches they could find. They begin to torture all the prisoners for any information on where the Spanish have fled to, and where have the Spanish have hidden their valuables. Morgan learns from a slave that the Governors of Maracaibo and Gibraltar have stored their riches in boats, and have hidden the boats deep in one of the several rivers that flow into the lake. Morgan separates his force in search of the hidden boats. After several days of searching the pirates find the boats, but they were empty of any treasure. The pirates learned that the Spanish had

emptied the boats and ran inland to hide in the jungle. Heavy rains and restricted terrain forced Morgan to stop the search and head back towards Maracaibo.

Upon returning to the City of Maracaibo, Morgan learns that a Spanish fleet is blocking his escape to the sea. Morgan sends a small party to confirm the reports. Morgan's men return, confirming that the Spanish had three ships blocking the escape route to the sea. Each Spanish ship was a man-o-war with over thirty guns. Morgan knows that it would not be possible to defeat the Spanish fleet that awaits him. Morgan and his men are trapped. Never before in his life had Morgan faced such a challenge. Morgan has always been the attacker, not the defender. The long odds Morgan faced before, were by his choosing, and Morgan always reduced the risk by using maneuver to hit the enemy where they were weak. Morgan always initiated the when and the where he would attack, and thus was always able to apply firepower where his small numbers would achieve the most effect upon the enemy. By not protecting his rear Morgan has become trapped, and the Spanish now have the advantage.

Morgan's courage and leadership are tested. The situation appears to be hopeless, but Morgan will not give into his fears. Morgan sends a message to the commander of the Spanish fleet. The message states that Morgan will spare the lives of the people in the city, and will not burn Maracaibo, if the Admiral of the Spanish fleet pays him a heavy ransom. This message by Morgan is a statement to his leadership. Morgan knew that the Spanish have out maneuvered his forces and were clearly capable of denying his fleet escape from Lake Maracaibo. Morgan knew how serious the situation was, but Morgan had also seen the Spanish military run before when they held the advantage. His message

might just scare the Spanish fleet enough to allow Morgan and his men to escape. By sending the message, Morgan also knew that he was buying time to consider all options and design a plan.

The Spanish commander realized that he held the tactical advantage. The Admiral of the Spanish fleet, Don Alonso del Campo y Espinosa, sent the same messenger back in two days with a letter for Morgan. The letter stated:

Letter of Don Alonso del Campo y Espinosa, Admiral of the Spanish Fleet, unto Captain Morgan, commander of the pirates.
Having understood by all our friends and neighbors the unexpected news that you have dared to attempt and commit hostilities in the countries, cities, towns, and villages belonging to the dominions of his Catholic Majesty, my Sovereign Lord and Master, I let you understand by these lines that I have come unto this place, according to my obligation, nigh unto that castle which you took out of the hands of a parcel of cowards; where I have put things into a very good posture of defence, and mounted again the artillery which you had nailed and dismounted. My intent is to dispute with you your passage out of the lake, and follow and pursue you everywhere, to the end you may see the performance of my duty.
Notwithstanding, if you be contented to surrender with humility all that you have taken, together with the slaves and all other prisoners, I will let you freely pass, without trouble or molestation; upon condition that you retire home presently unto your own country. But, in the case that you make any resistance or opposition unto these things that I proffer unto you, I do assure you I will command boats to come from Caracas, wherein I will put my troops, and, coming to Maracaibo, will cause you utterly to perish, by putting you every man to the sword. This is my last and absolute resolution. Be prudent, therefore, and do not abuse my bounty with ingratitude. I have with me very good soldiers, who desire nothing more ardently than to revenge on you and your people all the cruelties and base infamous actions you have committed upon the Spanish nation in America. Dated on board the Royal ship named the Magdalen, lying at anchor at the entry of the Lake of Maracaibo, this 24th day of April, 1669.
*Don Alonso del Campo y Espinosa*⁴⁶

When Morgan received the letter he immediately called a meeting of all his captains. Morgan read the letter to his leaders and asked them for their advice on the

situation. None of the captains wanted to surrender, they pointed out that they had earned the riches by fighting, and were not willing to give up what they had worked so hard for.⁴⁷

One of Morgan's leaders suggest that he can defeat the Spanish fleet by using a fire-ship made to look like Morgan's flag ship. Morgan and his men agree to fight the Spanish and decide to construct the fire-ship. To buy time to develop the plan, Morgan sends a response to the Admiral of the Spanish Fleet. Morgan informs the admiral that he will agree to do three things. First: Morgan will leave the city of Maracaibo without damaging the town, nor without payment of a ransom. Second: Morgan will release half the slaves, and all the prisoners, without ransom. Third: Morgan will release the four chief inhabitants of Gibraltar, which he was holding for ransom.⁴⁸

The Spanish Admiral is furious with Morgan's response. The admiral sends word to Morgan that if he does not comply with the offer presented by the Spanish Admiral, the Spanish fleet will destroy him by force. The admiral gives Morgan two days to comply.

The delay worked, Morgan and his men had the time they needed to complete the fire-ship. The idea of using a fire-ship was not new, but it was an extremely risky tactic. The plan called for one ship to be loaded with explosives and used as a decoy to get close to the Spanish fleet and blow up one or more of their ships. The fire-ship must be constructed to look like a fully manned and armed vessel, and it must be able to strike the Spanish fleet without assistance of a crew. The construction of the ship was a measure of

the pirate's ability to adapt and improvise under pressure. How the ship was constructed is an example of how Morgan used protection.

As soon as Morgan decided to fight, he immediately ordered all prisoners to be tied, so no one would be able to escape and inform the Spanish. Morgan learned from his experience at Puerto Principe, that prisoners would escape and inform the enemy of his plans. Morgan was determined not to let that happen to him again.

Morgan's men construct the fire-ship with great care, the ship must appear to be a fully manned ship. The crew goes to great lengths to ensure every detail is considered. Men made of wood were placed on the deck dressed in clothes. To make them look real, the pirates placed hats on fake men. Extra ports were cut in the ship and made to look like gun ports when they are filled with barrels of powder. The fake cannon made of wood, were covered with palm leaves soaked in tar to help the ship ignite. The construction of the ship is a testament to the initiative of the pirates.⁴⁹

On the 30th of April, 1669 Morgan orders his fleet to advance on the Spanish fleet. Leading Morgan's fleet is the fire-ship made to look like Morgan's flag ship. On board the fire-ship is only a skeleton crew, enough men to maneuver the ship close enough to the Spanish flag ship, the Magdalen. As the fire-ship closed in on the Spanish fleet, the Spanish Admiral attempted to turn his ship to fire upon the oncoming pirates. Every move the Spanish admiral made was countered by the small crew on the fire-ship, denying the Spanish the opportunity to fire. As the fire ship came closer many Spanish officers warned the admiral that it could be a fire-ship. By the time the Spanish Admiral considered the possibility, it was too late, the fire-ship was upon them. The Spanish

sailors attempted in vain to push the fire-ship away, within minutes the Spanish flag ship Magdalen was in flames. Most of the crew was able to jump ship and swim to shore before the huge Spanish man-o-war sank.⁵⁰

The second of the three Spanish ships headed for shore when they saw their flag ship go up in flames. In their hurry to escape to shore, the crew of the second ship caused their own ship to sink by running the ship aground. The crew all jumped overboard and managed to escape to the castle. The third ship, unable to escape either to shore, or out to sea, surrendered to the pirates without firing a shot.⁵¹

Morgan's men went ashore and attacked the Spanish, now defending the fort. The Spanish were able to organize themselves well and managed to hold off all the advances by the pirates. Morgan's men retreated to their ship in the harbor. The Spanish continued to reinforce the castle, expecting that Morgan would attack again the next day.

Morgan won a great victory over the Spanish, but the Spanish still held the forts which controlled the entry, and more importantly to Morgan, the exit from the harbor. Morgan knew that it would be extremely difficult to take the forts by land. Morgan and his men captured everything of value from the sinking Spanish ships. Morgan also learned everything about the Spanish now defending the forts from the prisoners his men have captured. The prisoners informed Morgan that there was another fleet of three Spanish men-o-war searching for pirates. Morgan decided that his fleet would need to leave as soon as possible before more Spanish soldiers arrive. Morgan sent a message to the Spanish admiral, now defending the fort, demanding that a ransom be paid for the

Spanish prisoners that Morgan held captive. The Spanish Admiral realized that he still could deny Morgan safe passage to the sea and refused to pay any ransom.⁵²

Morgan knew that time was not on his side, he needed a way out of the lake and into the ocean before more Spanish ships arrived. Morgan developed a plan to fool the Spanish and allow the pirates safe passage out of the harbor. The next day, in plain view of the Spanish defending the forts, Morgan sent troops by canoe to shore. The Spanish watched from the castle as the pirates rowed canoes ashore the entire day. The Spanish were convinced that Morgan would attack by land sometime that night. The Spanish reinforced the rear of the castle moving all the heavy guns to cover the most likely land avenues of approach. Morgan's tricked worked. Instead of dismounting his men on shore Morgan ordered them to hide in the bottom of the canoe and return to the ship. All the Spanish were able to see was twelve men row to the shore and two men return. The Spanish were certain that Morgan's force had come ashore and would assault their position.

That night, instead of attacking the castle, Morgan escaped. The pirate fleet let go their anchors and allowed the tide to carry their ships past the castle. When the Spanish figured out what Morgan was doing, the pirates let go their sails and began to speed away. The Spanish attempted to reposition the guns at the fort to fire on the fleeing pirates, but it was to no avail. Morgan tricked the Spanish Admiral again.⁵³

Morgan's escape from the Spanish at Maracaibo is a remarkable accomplishment. Morgan demonstrated that he clearly possessed, the most essential element of combat power, leadership. Morgan was a confident and competent leader, but it was his mistake

Morgan would never forget. For the first time Morgan made mistakes in maneuver and protection. Morgan's leadership saved his fleet at Maracaibo and enabled his fleet to overcome the longest odds they had ever faced.

The outcome at Maracaibo allowed Morgan's fame to grow even more. Upon returning to Jamaica, Morgan and his men enjoyed their share of the spoils. In Jamaica, Morgan learned from the Governor of Jamaica, Governor Modyford, that soon there would be a treaty between England and Spain. No longer would the governor be able to sanction Morgan's assaults on the Spanish. This news forced Morgan into planning what he knew would be his last operation. Morgan decided that the famous city of Panama would be a suitable target for his final expedition.

¹Howard Pyle, *The Buccaneers and Marooners of America* (Ann Arbor: Gryphon Books, 1971), 133.

²Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 153.

³Alec Moncreith, "Besieged by Thieves", *Military History* 3 (August 1991) : 44-49.

⁴David Cordingly, *Under The Black Flag* (New York: Random House, 1995), 52-53.

⁵*Ibid.*, 259.

⁶*Ibid.*, 43-44.

⁷*Ibid.*, 44.

⁸*Ibid.*, 44.

⁹*Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁰Moncreith, 44-49.

¹¹David Cordingly, *Pirates, Terror on the High Seas-from the Caribbean to the South China Sea* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, Inc., 1996), 38-39.

¹²*Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹³Cordingly, *Under The Black Flag*, 44.

¹⁴Exquemelin, 154.

¹⁵Cordingly, *Under The Black Flag*, 44.

¹⁶Moncreith, 44-49.

¹⁷Pyle, 132-133.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 144.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 146.

²¹*Ibid.*, 146.

²²Russell R. Hart, *Admirals of the Caribbean* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1922), 45-49.

²³Pyle, 150-149.

²⁴Exquemelin, 175.

²⁵Pyle, 150-153.

²⁶Cordingly, *Under The Black Flag*, 45.

²⁷Peter R. Galvin, *The Pirates Wake : A Geography of Piracy and Pirates as Geographers in Colonial Spanish America, 1536-1718*, 2vols. (Louisiana: University Printing Press, 1992), 243.

²⁸Taken from personal study of the terrain around Porto Bello, authors own field notes.

²⁹Pyle, 150-152.

³⁰Ibid., 150-152.

³¹Ibid., 150-153.

³²Exquemelin, 180.

³³Cordingly, *Under The Black Flag*, 46.

³⁴Ibid., 46.

³⁵Exquemelin, 180.

³⁶Cordingly, *Under The Black Flag*, 47.

³⁷Pyle, 150-151.

³⁸Captain James Burney, *The Buccaneers of America* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891) 69-70.

³⁹Exquemelin, 186-187.

⁴⁰Ibid., 191.

⁴¹Ibid., 192.

⁴²Ibid., 192.

⁴³Ibid., 195.

⁴⁴Ibid., 196.

⁴⁵Ibid., 196.

⁴⁶Ibid., 205-206.

⁴⁷Ibid., 206.

⁴⁸Ibid., 207.

⁴⁹Ibid., 207-208.

⁵⁰Ibid., 209-210.

⁵¹Ibid., 210.

⁵²Ibid., 216.

⁵³Ibid., 218.

CHAPTER 4

SAN LORENZO

Up until this time in his career, everything that Morgan did, the sacking of Porto Bello and the attacks on Maracaibo, were all legal in the eyes of the English throne. Every campaign was sanctioned by the throne through the Governor of Jamaica. The man who made Morgan's escapades legal was Governor Modyford, the Governor of Jamaica. The arrangement between Morgan and Modyford was the essence of the English strategy in the New World. The aim of the English was to deny Spain from gaining all the wealth in the Americas and at the same time to secure wealth for the English throne. This strategy allowed Morgan and Modyford to become very wealthy men and at the same time helped achieve the strategic aim of the English.

When Morgan returned to Jamaica from Maracaibo, he learned that his arrangement with Governor Modyford would soon come to an end. The governor had received a letter from Lord Arlington informing him that hostilities with Spain must stop.¹ The reason for this was the signing of a treaty between Spain and England in July of 1670. The purpose of the treaty was to settle disputes between the two countries in the West Indies or the Americas. The treaty was called the Treaty of America and was designed to bring peace in the New World and boost business for both England and Spain. The real impact of the treaty is that it would put an end to the business of privateering and end the buccaneer way of life. Several articles were placed in the treaty to specifically address the problems that men like Morgan and Modyford had caused the

treaty, and its specific articles, would greatly impact the future of Henry Morgan. It is critical to understand a few key articles of the treaty to understand the events that would follow. Those key articles of the Treaty of America are:

Art. II. There shall be an universal peace and sincere friendship, as well as in America as in other parts, between the kings of Great Britain and Spain, and their heirs and successors, their kingdoms, plantations, &c.

III. That all hostilities, depredations, &c., shall cease between the subjects of the said kings.

IV. The two kings shall take care that their subjects forbear all acts of hostility, and shall in call in all commissions, letters of marque and reprisals, and punish all offenders, obliging them to make reparation.

VII. All past injuries on both sides shall be buried in oblivion.

VIII. The king of Great Britain shall hold and enjoy all the lands, countries, &c., he is now possessed of in America.

IX. The subjects on each side shall forbear trading or sailing to any places whatsoever under the dominion of the other without particular license.

XIV. Particular offences shall be repaired in the common course of justice, and no reprisals made unless justice be denied or unreasonably retarded.²

The official notice of the treaty would take several months before reaching Jamaica, but the unofficial notice spread quickly. Rumor of the treaty led many buccaneers to begin planning expeditions against the Spanish. The buccaneers were all eager for what they knew would be their final strike against Spain. Several buccaneers began to plan actions on their own when jealousy of who would lead the plan caused planning to accelerate. The French and the English buccaneers were racing to develop a scheme that would attract enough men to accomplish it. Henry Morgan was the only man who possessed the skills to undertake such a large-scale operation but Morgan was retired. When Morgan heard the news from Modyford he began to accelerate his retirement plans. Morgan purchased more land and planned to retire to his Jamaica plantation with his wife.

Most historic writings about Morgan claim that he was quick to plan a final expedition before the Treaty of America was official. This is not completely true. The decision for one final expedition was a complicated process, but one that Morgan most likely persuaded. Morgan probably did get caught up in the competition along with other buccaneers to launch a final attack. Morgan felt that one more grand plan would be attempted by the buccaneers. The question was, who was going to lead it? The timing of the events favored Morgan. At the time, Morgan was the most successful buccaneer in all of the Caribbean. If anyone was capable of pulling together the men and the supplies needed for a large operation, it was Morgan. The timing of the treaty most likely was a factor in pushing Morgan towards considering one more expedition.

Before deciding on what to do Morgan faced several options. Morgan had gained enough wealth over the years that he could retire a very rich man and spend the rest of his days on Jamaica. Morgan could also open a legitimate business and honor the Treaty of America, and the English throne. In fact, retirement to a legitimate business is what Morgan initially planned to do. Morgan did not need to conduct any further actions for financial reasons. The intelligent option would have been for Morgan to face the facts of the changing times and set a new course for his life. However, Morgan did not do this. Why did Morgan decide to lead one more campaign? Why take the risk of one more operation that could not be protected by the law and may lead to legal repercussions? The answer is not simple. Clearly Morgan liked the fame and was beginning to believe in his own invincibility, but Morgan was not stupid. Morgan would not conduct any operation that was not somehow sanctioned by the English Throne. The legality of the

operation was crucial for Morgan. The decision for Morgan to lead a final expedition came when a small Spanish privateer broke the treaty first.

At the same time Jamaica received word to halt hostilities towards the Spanish, the Governor of Cartagena received opposite instructions from Spain. The Governor of Cartagena received word from Spain authorizing war against the English in the West Indies. The governor called for privateers and the call was answered by a young and dashing man named Captain Rivero.³ Rivero set out on his own personal war against the buccaneers. His first action was against a small boat of pirates off the coast of Cuba. The pirates were led by Captain Bart, and at first proved to be a challenge to the young Rivero, but the odds were with Rivero. Rivero's seventy men and large war ship sank the smaller vessel and killed the buccaneer captain. Rivero claimed himself a hero to Spain and gained fame in Cartagena. Rivero began to believe that he himself would destroy all the buccaneers and set sail for Jamaica. In June of 1670, Rivero raided a village on the north coast of Jamaica and then a month later attacked a small village on the south coast. Rivero did not accomplish much with his attacks, and never posed a threat to Jamaica, but his actions provoked demands for retaliation. In addition to the raids by Rivero, news came from the Governor of Curacao that Spain had declared war on Jamaica. The Governor of Jamaica called for a council to decide what Jamaica would do.

The Council of Jamaica assembled and agreed to take action. The council decided that a commission be granted to Henry Morgan making him Admiral and Commander and Chief to all war ships in the harbor. The commission authorized Admiral Morgan to attack, seize, and destroy any enemy vessel. The new Admiral Morgan also had the

authority to land in the enemies country and take actions against the enemy that would assist in keeping peace in Jamaica. Morgan was commissioned to take any action he deemed appropriate against the Spanish. Morgan received his commission on August 1, 1670.⁴ Morgan sent out the call for buccaneers to join him for one last campaign. All buccaneers interested in following Morgan were to join up on the Island of Tortuga, off the North Coast of Hispaniola.

The fame of Morgan led to over 2,000 men and 36 ships volunteering to join him. The men and ships all linked up on Tortuga on October 24th, 1670.⁵ The overwhelming response to Morgan's call is a testimony to Morgan's leadership ability. Buccaneers did not respond because they were loyal to any one commander in particular, they followed who they believed would achieve victory, and make them rich.

Morgan arrived on the island later and called for a council to begin the planning of the upcoming operation. Keeping to form, Morgan would not tell the crew the destination. The objective of the expedition would be kept a secret until Morgan was sure it would not be able to leak to the Spanish. This was how Morgan learned to protect his plans from the Spanish. Morgan knew that no matter how close he kept a secret, secrets always found a way to leak. In today's military this is called operational security, or OPSEC. It is a fundamental part of protection, and one that Morgan knew the importance of. Morgan also considered operational security and protection when he selected Tortuga as his rendezvous location. The island was of little concern to the Spanish and was far enough away from the main passages to hide his intentions. As hard as Morgan tried, it was difficult to hide the signals that something on a grand scale was being planned.

Morgan knew the overwhelming turn out of buccaneers surely sent a signal to the Spanish. Morgan planned to at least keep the objective of his plan a secret.

When and how Morgan decided on Panama as the objective, is not entirely known. It is known that Morgan was considering three objectives. Cartagena in Colombia, Vera Cruz in Mexico, and Panama City.⁶ Panama City held several advantages over the other options. Panama City was protected the least of the three. Vera Cruz and Cartagena were both well protected from land and sea approaches. Panama City was only protected to defend against an attack by sea. Panama depended on the vast and difficult jungle to protect the city from a land approach. Panama City was also believed to hold the most wealth at the time of the attack. All three held the reputation of being impossible to capture. Morgan also had a personal stake in the choice. Morgan remembered the actions of the mayor of Panama City when Morgan captured Porto Bello. Morgan promised the mayor that he would return to collect his pistol, which Morgan gave to the mayor as an example of how easy it was to capture Porto Bello. Did Morgan select his final prize for personal reasons or did he remain objective? Knowing Morgan's past achievements, he most likely made the choice based on which city held the largest sum of loot, and therefor benefited him the most, that city was Panama. The decision to attack Panama would not be made known until the expedition was ready to launch and that would take two months.

Morgan began the task of building a fleet suitable to capture the city of Panama. Many of the recruits that quickly rushed to sign up with Morgan were not well equipped. Many men possessed only the shirt on their back and little more. Morgan needed to find

provisions for the large fleet that answered his call. This was no small task. Food and munitions would be needed to sustain this large force for several months. Morgan planned to equip his fleet by dividing them into three groups. One party consisting of four ships and four hundred men would sail with the intent to assault small villages and steal all the corn and grain they could find. The second party would launch a hunting expedition on Tortuga to kill as many cows and wild animals as possible. The meat would then be salted and dried for the storage on the ship. The remainder of the buccaneers would remain at port to clean and prepare the assembled fleet for the upcoming operation. Morgan was planning a massive operation, the likes he had never done before, the preparation alone was extremely difficult, while the whole time trying to keep his intentions a secret.

The party of the four ships and four hundred men sailed for the continent of South America. Their objective was to steal from villages along the river De le Hacha. The river is located between the cities of Cartagena and Santa Marta. When the party arrived they were soon spotted by the Spanish who occupied the village of La Rancheria. The Spanish prepared for the assault they were sure the pirates would make. The Pirates attacked early in the morning by approaching by land along the least likely avenues towards the village. The fighting lasted all day, but by nightfall the pirates owned the town and began to pillage their prize. For several days the pirates searched and captured fleeing Spanish. The prisoners were tortured into revealing the location of anything worth value to the pirates. When it was clear that nothing of value was left the pirates demanded a ransom of a large sum of corn, their original objective. The towns people

were all to glad to pay anything to rid themselves of the pirates. The Spanish paid with 4,000 bushels of corn. Along with the corn the party also captured a Spanish ship and large sums of silver and gold from the village.⁷

Morgan began to worry about the party that he sent to steal corn. They were gone over five weeks. Morgan began to think that the Spanish either captured them, or that the party captured so much wealth, they left the expedition. Morgan also worried that the Spanish may have been alerted by the raids of the party. The method in which the raid was executed, the diligent search for gold, then only settling for corn as a last payment, made the raid appear more like a separate act of piracy than a supply mission for Morgan. Morgan and his fleet were glad to see the party return with an additional ship and the supplies needed for the operation at hand. Morgan now commanded a fleet of 37 ships and over 2,000 men. The time had come to begin the final expedition.

Before departing Morgan divided the fleet into two squadrons. A Vice Admiral was appointed for the second squadron along with commanders and officers for each squadron. Morgan met with all the commanders to establish the payment procedures for the operation. Morgan knew how to motivate men and he knew that agreements were needed to be made in advance to inspire the men to carry out the most difficult tasks. Morgan issued letters commissioning the officers to act in all manner of hostility against the Spanish.⁸ Morgan also had all the leaders agree on payment for everyone in the fleet, including acts of bravery and or wounds suffered in battle. They all agreed first that one hundredth of all that was captured went to Morgan himself. Captains would draw the shares of eight men. Other payments included, 1,500 pieces of eight or 15 slaves for loss

of both legs, 1,800 pieces of eight or 18 slaves for the loss of both hands, 600 pieces of eight or 6 slaves for the loss of one hand or one leg, and 100 pieces of eight for the loss of an eye. For leading an assault or capturing Spanish colors, 50 pieces of eight would be paid. It was agreed that all of these payments would be made prior to dividing the spoils amongst the fleet. Morgan also declared that any commander of a ship that captured a Spanish vessel would be entitled to a tenth of what the vessel held before dividing amongst the fleet.⁹

These agreements were common to the buccaneers, it let them know where they stood and that there was some compensation for the risk they would take. The payments were also a great way to motivate men to fight, especially men who only fought for money. The men knew that to get paid they had to fight and they had to win. If they performed well or were wounded they would be paid. Pay was the only way to get the buccaneer soldier to fight, and Morgan did it extremely well. The men who followed Morgan trusted his ability and his word because he made his word known up front, and made all the leaders agree before the start of the operation. With all the arrangements made, the expedition was ready to launch. It was time to decide on the objective.

On December 12, 1670 Morgan held a council of war on board his flag ship to decide on the objective. The council decided that Panama City was to be the target. Morgan devised a brilliant but difficult plan for the taking of Panama. Morgan's plan called for taking Panama by land, similar to his attack on Porto Bello. The main land route to Panama was the Las Cruces trail from Porto Bello. Morgan knew that he would not be able to use the Las Cruces trail for his route to Panama. To use the logical easy

route to Panama would leave him vulnerable to ambushes along the way. The Las Cruces route would require the capture of Porto Bello and would surely alert Panama to Morgan's plan and Morgan did not have the resources required to take Porto Bello and Panama.

Morgan's plan was to take Panama using a more concealed route. Morgan's plan was to maneuver his force against the enemies known weak point. Panama was not constructed to defend against a land attack, so it was obvious to Morgan, that by land is the way to attack the city. The problem Morgan faced, was how to maneuver his force to the defenders exposed weakness. Morgan's plan was to use the least expected approach to the city. Morgan would come through the jungle. The plan itself was a great example of maneuver, but the execution of the plan would prove to be difficult.

The Panama plan would extend Morgan's line of communication well away from his ships. The distance from where Morgan would disembark his ships to Panama City was well over fifty miles. His ships would be left vulnerable to Spanish attack and Morgan needed to ensure that his plan took this into account. Morgan knew to protect his force he needed to protect his ships. He knew that if the Spanish discovered his plans they could easily capture his ships and wait for his return. Morgan remembered the hard lesson he learned in Maracaibo. Morgan planned to secure his rear by first securing the out post island of Santa Catalina. After Santa Catalina was secure Morgan would secure Fort San Lorenzo on the Atlantic side of Panama and move by canoe down the Chagres river, then by foot to Panama City. It is hard to imagine how the plan was received by Morgan's war council. The plan surely had to be questioned by the council. Most

buccaneers were very familiar with the terrain in Panama, but Morgan's reputation to accomplish the unbelievable most likely persuaded the doubters. Morgan's reputation and his leadership ability surely helped convince the council on the Panama plan. As the plan was executed, the doubters would continue to question Morgan and the ability of the plan to succeed. Panama would prove to be the biggest test of leadership of Henry Morgan.

On December 16, 1670, just four days after the war council, Morgan sailed from Hispaniola at the head of the largest force he ever commanded. It took four days to sail to the island where only a few years prior, Morgan and his old friend Mansfield attempted to establish a buccaneer strong hold. Thoughts of revenge surely had to be in the mind of Morgan, but he knew how important protecting his fleet would be to accomplishing the difficult task that lay ahead. Morgan needed to secure the island for two reasons, as mentioned the island would help secure Morgan's rear and it would also serve as a staging base for his land invasion of Panama. Upon arriving to Santa Catalina, today known as San Andres, about 100 miles off the eastern coast of Nicaragua, Morgan approached slowly to determine the best way to secure the island. The island was divided into two islands by only a small body of water, which could be crossed easily. The island was occupied by only 450 people and only 190 of them were soldiers, but it possessed nine small fortifications placed well to cover all approaches.¹⁰ Morgan decided to land an assault force of one thousand men to attempt to overwhelm the defenders by land. The numbers favored the buccaneers, but they soon found out that this was not going to be an easy assault.

Morgan and his men moved through the woods in attempt to capture the fortifications of the island. The Spanish placed no forts on the first island nor did they leave any outposts. All the people on the island retreated into the small forts when they saw the pirates approaching. Morgan's force divided and moved with no guides, only the memory of the pirates who had been here before with Morgan and Mansfield, but the Spanish had improved the islands defenses since then. At first Morgan's force faced no opposition as they moved through the woods towards the second island. When the pirates began to move towards the fortifications on the second island they were met with fire. It soon became clear to Morgan that the Spanish had every approach route covered with cannon fire. Morgan's men retreated back to the first island to regroup and rest for the night. That night it rained and the rain lasted until day break. The pirates and their weapons were soaked. As soon as the rain broke the pirates began to dry their equipment in the sun. When they were dry enough, Morgan's men moved again towards the second island. The same time they began to move, the rain began to fall again. The tropical down pour halted the pirates and they were forced to withdrawal. Morgan's men were demoralized and began to complain about their condition. Morgan lost the initiative and needed to act quickly to motivate his army of pirates before they gave up.

Morgan sent a message to the governor in charge of the defenders of the island. Morgan's message informed the governor that if the defenders did not surrender in two hours, Morgan would kill all of the Spanish soldiers. The governor responded that he needed two hours to discuss the issue with his council. Morgan granted the governor the two hours. After the time had elapsed, the governor sent a party under a flag of truce to

meet with Morgan. After meeting with his council, the governor had agreed to give up the island to Morgan. The governor was convinced that he did not possess a sufficient size force to defend against Morgan's large fleet. The governor made a proposal to Morgan. The governor did not wish to surrender without a fight, if he did, his reputation would be ruined forever, and he would never be respected again. The governor requested that Morgan agree to stage a fight which would allow the defenders to have appeared to make a stance against the pirates. Morgan agreed.

The governor laid out the exact plans for Morgan to use. Only the governor and the defending officers were to know of the plan. Morgan's men attacked according to the plan and the Spanish retreated giving up the fortresses and the island. The plan worked and Morgan and his men soon owned the island. When Morgan occupied the island, his men disarmed the Spanish and sent the men out to the plantations to search for provisions. The women and children were all kept in the church as prisoners to ensure the return of the men. Morgan began to survey the defenses of the island. It is hard to imagine what Morgan must have felt when he saw for his own eyes how strong the defenses were on the island. The fortresses made it clear to Morgan that taking the island by force would have been a difficult task. It was a very strange request Morgan had granted the governor, but one that saved many lives of his crew.

Morgan's men searched the small forts for all that could be of use to them. Over thirty thousand pounds of powder, 48 cannon and 170 muskets were found on the island.¹¹ Also important to Morgan were the prisoners on the island. Three of them had experience in Panama. Morgan offered the prisoners equal shares in the operation and

save passage back to Jamaica if they guided him to Panama City. All three prisoners were pleased with Morgan's offer and agreed to be guides. Morgan was now ready to begin the next phase of his plan.

Morgan and his fleet spent several weeks on the island before beginning the assault on Panama. The time was spent preparing for the upcoming assault, gathering provisions, and rendering the islands defenses useless to the Spanish. Morgan did not want to have to fight here again on his return from Panama. To make sure he would not have to fight here on his return, Morgan ordered that all the guns on the island be spiked and that all the ships and small vessels be sunk. Morgan surely remembered the hard lessons he learned at Maracaibo and again had the vision to protect his force against a potential threat.

Morgan and the main fleet stayed on Santa Catalina and sent four ships and a supply boat ahead to execute the next phase of the operation. On the ships was a force that consisted of over four hundred buccaneers, under the command of Captain Joseph Bradley. Bradley was one of Morgan's best and most trusted captains. The mission for Bradley and his force was to capture the Spanish fort guarding the entrance to Morgan's land route to Panama. The name of the fort was Castle Chagres after the river it guarded, the Spanish called it Fort San Lorenzo, as it is known today.

Fort San Lorenzo was an impregnable Spanish fort sitting high over the mouth of the Chagres river. From the forts vantage point every ship attempting to pass from the Atlantic Ocean to the Chagres could easily be fired upon. Morgan's plan called for advancing down the Chagres river, but before he could do that, Morgan needed to secure

Fort San Lorenzo. The plan was to secure Fort San Lorenzo with Captain Bradley's small force and man the fort with buccaneers to cover the rear and protect the fleet until the mission was complete.

Fort San Lorenzo still stands today and is located west of Colon City adjacent to the US Army jungle training facility on Fort Sherman. The site is open year round, and visitors are able to freely explore the ruins. It is blatantly obvious upon visiting the fort just how difficult, but also, just how necessary it was to secure the fort before passage could be made down the river. The fort sits on a high point and is surrounded by steep embankments on three sides. To the front, or west, the fort looks directly over the Atlantic Ocean, and the western coastline of Panama. To the north, the fort overlooks the rugged coast line for several miles. To the south, the fort overlooks the mouth of the Chagres river as it joins the Atlantic Ocean. The only way to approach the fort by land is from the east or the rear. The natural defenses made the site a perfect place to defend from. The fort was located on terrain that controlled access to the river and the surrounding coast. Today, the military calls this type of terrain, key terrain. It is not clear how much Morgan knew about the fort's defenses, or why he chose such a small force to secure it. What is known, is that Morgan picked one of his best men to lead the attack.

Captain Bradley was very familiar with the coast of Panama. Bradley had sailed many times to the surrounding coast and was known by the Spanish in the area.¹² How much he knew of the Fort San Lorenzo is not known, or if he had ever been to this particular part of the coast. Captain Bradley and his fleet arrived near Fort San Lorenzo

three days after leaving Santa Catalina. The Spanish soldiers in the fort were alert and waiting. Bradley's ships were fired upon as they attempted to anchor in a harbor over three miles north from the mouth of the Chagres River. No damage was recorded by the initial fire from the fort, and once in port the ships could not be seen from the fort. The distance was over three miles, but Captain Bradley was now aware that the defenders of the fort knew he was coming, surprise was lost.

Bradley most likely anchored near what is today called Devils Beach, a little over three miles north of Fort San Lorenzo. The coast line in this area is extremely rugged, only a few places exist that could have held Bradley's fleet. Most accounts of Bradley's attack on San Lorenzo claim that he landed his ships to the south of the fort. This is not true, but it can be explained. Most historians who wrote about this assault referenced Exquemelin, who chronicled the experiences of Henry Morgan first hand. According to Exquemelin, Bradley landed on the south side of the fort. It was Exquemelin's map which caused this slight error of history. The map projected the point of land, on which San Lorenzo stands, pointing to the north and not to the west as it truly is. Using the incorrect map, Bradley did land to the south of the fort. Using a correct map, Bradley landed to the north. This error in reference is extremely important when studying the attack on the actual ground today. If Bradley landed to the south of San Lorenzo, he would have had to maneuver his force a greater distance than recorded. Bradley would have also had to cross the Chagres river just to get his force on the same side as the fort and his route could have been covered by fire from the fort. To maneuver this way would have been extremely difficult and time consuming. To maneuver from the north was the

logical and safest way to position the buccaneer force for an assault on San Lorenzo.

Bradley chose the best route, he came from the north.

Early the next morning Bradley began to maneuver his forces in position to attack the fort. Bradley and his men moved through the jungle from their beach port to the rear of the fort. The move itself is estimated to be a little less than three miles. It is not clear why Bradley did not attempt to move his force at night. Perhaps Bradley felt that he had already lost surprise and would not benefit much from a night move. Perhaps Bradley needed to rest his force and chose the morning to move because he did not feel they were ready. The move itself should not have been too difficult for the pirates. Many small trails exist today along the route that Bradley and his men took. Most likely a few trails existed then, created by the Spanish soldiers to allow them to walk to the surrounding coast to fish, bathe, or launch small boats. It took Bradley all morning to move his force through the jungle, reaching the fort about two in the afternoon.¹³

The time of the move indicates that the move to the fort was not met by resistance. Why the Spanish did not position ambushes along the way is not clear. Ambushes would have caused a great deal of damage to the pirates force. The Spanish knew where the pirates were, not attacking them along the route was a big mistake. The Spanish relied solely on their strong defense of the fort. The movement to the fort may have been with out resistance, but it surely had to take a toll on the pirates. Bradley's men moved in the jungle for six to eight hours, the move alone, during the hottest part of the day, would have drained even the best of the buccaneers.

Getting his force to the fort was only a small part of the challenge that Bradley faced. Taking the fort would not be so easy. As mentioned, Fort San Lorenzo stood on top of a huge hill overlooking the mouth of the Chagres. The fort was protected on three sides by natural steep walls of over two hundred feet. The fort itself was made up of stone walls with a thirty foot ditch surrounding the entire fort. The walls of the ditch were thick and filled with dirt. The only way into the fort was a draw bridge on the land side. Inside, the fort was defended by over three hundred Spanish soldiers. The Spanish were ready for the pirates. As Bradley maneuvered his men for the attack they quickly came under fire from the fort. Bradley lost several men quickly to the first rounds fired by the Spanish. It must have become clear to Bradley very quickly just how difficult a challenge he faced. His force was in range of the Spanish guns and the only thing between the pirates and the fort was an open field. The situation appeared hopeless. Bradley and his men contemplated their desperate situation. To assault over an open field covered by with fire, was certain death, and if they could make it across the field, how would they gain access to the fort? On the other hand, if they did not take the fort, they would fail and be scorned by their fellow buccaneers, who would soon arrive with Morgan.¹⁴ Bradley decided to risk the assault.

The buccaneers assaulted the fort several times at the cost of many lives. The Spanish defended the fort well and were able to easily push back the attackers. The Spanish poured constant fire each time the pirates attacked. The defenders cried out to the attackers. *"Come on, ye English dogs, enemies to God and our King; let your other companions that are behind you come on too; ye shall not go to Panama this bout."*¹⁵

The initial assaults were all failures. Some pirates did actually make it to the walls of the fort, but were not able to climb over or find a breach. The pirates retreated and decided to wait until night to try again. Once it was dark, the pirates returned to the assault and were able to reach the outer walls of the fort. Exquemelin tells how an extraordinary event took place that turned the advantage to the pirates.

The story goes that one pirate was hit in the back with an arrow fired from the fort. The arrow went clean through the pirates body. Angry and defiant, the pirate pulled the arrow from his body, wrapped a piece of cotton around it, and fired it back at the fort from his musket. The powder of the musket ignited the cotton on the arrow and when the arrow landed in the fort, it caught the fort on fire.¹⁶ No telling where truth ends and legend begins in the story by Exquemelin. No doubt the conditions existed for a fire to start. The month of January is in the middle of the dry season in Panama. Though the Atlantic coast receives rainfall the entire year, and is never truly dry, it is dryer than rainy season. Along with the decrease in rainfall, dry season also brings with it a strong breeze. The dryness along with the increased wind, made the conditions ripe for a fire. Add the igniting of gun powder by both sides, and it is easy to explain how a fire could have started.

At first the Spanish did not take notice to the fire. The arrow ignited some palm fronds used as thatched roofs for some of the buildings inside the fort. As the fire began to spread, the Spanish became increasingly busy with attempting to put out the flames while the pirates, sensing that their luck had changed, kept the pressure on. The pirates attempted to climb the walls in several areas while the Spanish let down their defense.

The climbers were met by hot flaming liquid poured down on them by the defenders. The pirates ceased the assault around midnight and decided to let the fire inflict whatever damage it could, while they infiltrated men close to the fort as snipers to fire on anyone who showed themselves throughout the night. The tactic worked, by day light the pirates could see that the fire burned the wooden supports around the ditch causing the earth, which the supports held, to fall and fill the ditch. This created several breaches into the fort.

Bradley and his men rushed the breaches, but were met by Spanish defenders who were determined not to give up the fort. Bradley was wounded seriously leading the assault through one of the breaches. Though wounded, Bradley continued to direct the attack. He ordered his men to continue the pressure. The attacking pirates and the continuing spreading fire were becoming too much for the defenders. The fire had spread into one of the storage rooms inside the fort and caused a great explosion of the defenders gun powder. The defenders still refused to surrender, some of the defending soldiers leaped in desperation off the banks of the cliffs that surrounded the fort. The Spanish who jumped chose to die than to fall prisoner to the pirates. Soon Bradley's men entered the fort and demanded the Spanish to surrender. The governor in charge of the fort refused to surrender and continued to fight with only a handful of men remaining alive. Only when the governor was killed did the remaining soldiers surrender.

Only thirty soldiers remained alive of the three hundred fourteen that defended the fort. Of those thirty, none of them were officers and only ten suffered no wounds. The casualties to the buccaneers were also great, over one hundred dead, including Captain

Bradley, and over seventy wounded.¹⁷ The price Morgan paid for taking San Lorenzo was high. The information that Morgan's men found out from the prisoners who surrendered indicated that the rest of the operation was going to be just as difficult. The prisoners informed the pirates, that prior to the attack, eight or nine soldiers deserted and fled to Panama City, to inform the Governor of Panama of the pirates arrival on the Atlantic coast. The prisoners also informed the pirates that word was already sent to Panama of Morgan's plot against the city. A message had come from Cartagena that Morgan was establishing a fleet in Hispaniola and would attack Panama City by land. The Governor of Panama was instructed to improve his defenses. This caused the governor to reinforce the garrison at Fort San Lorenzo.

The news from Cartagena came from a man who had survived Morgan's foraging party along the river De la Hacha, the party that was sent by Morgan to search for corn to supply the fleet. Morgan's attempt to keep his plans a secret failed. How the informant figured out Morgan's design is easy to reason. Most likely men on a raiding party drank a little too much and boasted of what might be Morgan's plan. It is important to note that the pirates did not yet know where they were going to attack, but they did know what the possibilities were. One thing was certain, Morgan's operational security failed, his plans were known, and Panama City knew he was coming.

Morgan sailed from Santa Catalina after receiving the news that Castle Chagres was in the hands of the pirates. It took Morgan and his fleet eight days to sail to San Lorenzo. Upon reaching San Lorenzo, Morgan's men spotted the English flag over the castle and began to cheer. According to Exquemelin, the pirates cheered so much that

four of the fleet's ships, Morgan's being one of them, sailed too close to the mouth of the river and were sunk when they collided with rocks. The men and equipment were all saved, but the ships were lost.¹⁸

Once on shore Morgan was greeted with loud cheers, his men were proud of the prize they had captured for their leader. How the news from the prisoners affected Morgan is not entirely known. If he thought of canceling the mission, his actions did not indicate it. Morgan immediately instructed his men to begin restoring the fortifications of the fort to protect against a Spanish counter attack. Morgan knew that the Spanish had ships close enough that they could send a large enough force that could cause damage or destroy his remaining ships if he left them unprotected. When Morgan finished with the restoration of the fort, he ordered a garrison of five hundred men to defend the fort and an additional one hundred fifty to guard the ships.¹⁹ Keeping such a large force behind at San Lorenzo is a good indication of how much emphasis Morgan placed on protection. Morgan hid his fleet of ships in the river where they could best be protected. As Morgan learned the mouth of the river was difficult to navigate through, it was protected by large rocks that could not be seen when the tide was high. The fort also maintained smaller fortifications at the base of the hill that could fire close range at any ship attempting the difficult maneuver of gaining entrance through the mouth of the Chagres.

Prior to beginning the cross country move to Panama, Morgan needed to organize his force for the movement. Morgan would need to take along a sufficient amount of men, munitions, and supplies. Morgan's plan was to sail down the Chagres in small boats and canoes then move by foot to reach the city. How long Morgan actually

expected the move to take to the city is not known. What is known is that Morgan ordered his men to travel as light as possible, the priority for supplies to be carried was placed on ammunition and weapons not on food. The force Morgan tailored for the trip consisted of twelve hundred men in five boats and thirty-two canoes.²⁰ There are probably two reasons why Morgan took very little food. The first was that he planned to capture supplies to sustain his force from the Spanish outposts and ambushes, he was sure lay waiting for him. The second was that Morgan most likely did not expect that the movement would take more than two or three days. Morgan and his men would soon regret their decision not to bring sufficient food for the trip.

¹David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag* (New York: Random House, 1995), 50.

²Captain James Burney, *History of the Buccaneers of America* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891), 72,73.

³Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag*, 50.

⁴*Ibid.*, 50.

⁵Alec Moncreith, "Besieged by Thieves", *Military History* 3 (August 1991) : 45.

⁶Burney, 73.

⁷Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 227.

⁸*Ibid.*, 229.

⁹*Ibid.*, 229-230.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 235-236.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 237.

¹²*Ibid.*, 237.

¹³Ibid., 240-241.

¹⁴Ibid., 240-241.

¹⁵Ibid., 241.

¹⁶Ibid., 241.

¹⁷Ibid., 244.

¹⁸Ibid., 246.

¹⁹Ibid., 246.

²⁰ Ibid., 247.

CHAPTER 5

PANAMA CITY

What Morgan learned from the prisoners taken at Fort San Lorenzo did not seem to impact his belief that Panama City could be taken. Morgan knew that the Governor of Panama was now aware of his plan and had reinforced the garrison in the city. Morgan must have felt that he still had a sufficient size force to destroy even a larger and now prepared force of Spanish waiting for him. It was Morgan's plan to attack by land, and the fact that Panama had no fortifications to defend against a land attack, that must have made Morgan believe the plan was still feasible. Morgan had faith in the plan, he had done it before. Morgan knew that by maneuvering his force where the enemy is weak he could be successful, even with a smaller force.

The maneuver Morgan would attempt this time was greater than anything he had ever attempted before. What dangers could he expect along the way? The prisoners taken at San Lorenzo informed Morgan that he would definitely be met by ambushes on his way to Panama. What Morgan did to take this into account was order his men not to take any food. Morgan planned to survive off the supplies they would capture or that the Spanish outposts along the way would leave. Morgan had moved a large force through the jungle before at Porto Bello and in Cuba. Morgan must have felt that he was vulnerable to ambushes. Morgan's plan to survive on the food they would obtain from Spanish outposts along the way was a clear indication that Morgan expected contact with

the enemy. Morgan expected to be ambushed, but did not think that the ambushes would cause any significant damage to his force.

Morgan departed Fort San Lorenzo on January 18, 1671, and began his long trip across the isthmus of Panama. The date Morgan departed San Lorenzo and the date of his attack on Panama are disputed in several writings. The mistake can be traced back to the translation of Exquemelin's book into English. At the beginning of chapter five in Exquemelin's book the date that is listed for Morgan departing San Lorenzo is a mistake.¹ This error caused many erroneous references in historical writings, but all the references generally agree on the amount of time it took Morgan to cross Panama.

Morgan's plan to move his force south east along the Chagres River then by foot directly south to Panama City must have appeared easy. The route Morgan chose, though an unlikely avenue to move an army, was a route that was traveled by Spanish supply boats, it could be done. Morgan must have felt that his leadership would be needed to motivate the men along the way, as he had done at Porto Bello. It is doubtful that Morgan knew exactly how great a challenge lay ahead for him and his force of pirates. Morgan's leadership would be tested over the ten-day trip to Panama as it had never been tested before.

The first day of the trip his force moved a distance of about eighteen miles to a place called Dos Brazos.² The men went ashore to rest for a few hours. The men were severely cramped in the tight boats and needed to stretch out their limbs. Morgan felt he should have covered more ground and was disappointed in the distance they covered, but the worst was still ahead. Compared to what was ahead, the first day's travel would

prove to be the best of the journey. The men searched the surrounding small farms for food, but could find none. With nothing to eat, the men smoked pipes of tobacco and rested. Buccaneers were tough men, but after a trip of eighteen miles up the Chagres, they surely were exhausted. Some food at the end of the day would have been a welcome sight. The men rested with their stomachs empty.

The second day Morgan moved began to move his force very early down the river. After only a few miles they were close to a place called Cruz de Juan Gallego. It was here that the river became too difficult to navigate. The second day of the move, would have been 19 January, this is in the middle of the dry season in Panama. The Chagres had become very low and was obstructed by hanging trees. Movement became extremely difficult and Morgan thought they would move faster by foot. Morgan and his men must have been in extremely low and flat ground and with the low water caused by dry season, must have appeared more like a swamp than a river. This area was flooded when the Panama Canal was constructed and now is part of Gatun Lake. The guides recommended that Morgan move by foot to dryer land. The guides told Morgan that if he moved by foot, he only needed to move about six miles before he would reach better terrain. Morgan decided to take the advice of his guides and try to move by foot. Morgan directed that guards be left behind to protect the boats and canoes. Morgan's men made preparations to leave behind one hundred and sixty men to guard the boats.³ With the preparations made Morgan decides to depart the next day. The men had completed a second day of movement. They had only gone a few miles and still had nothing to eat.

The third day was the 20th of January. They disembarked the boats and began to move early in the morning. The night must have been terrible. The cramped quarters of the boats must not have allowed anyone to get comfortable. The nights in Panama are covered in darkness for about twelve hours. This means that Morgan's men spent a long twelve hour night crammed into small boats, trying to stay dry, and the whole time fighting off insects. The middle of a swamp is no place to get a good nights rest. Morgan's men must have been eager to get moving on the third day.

Led by guides, Morgan and his men begin to move by foot for what they think is going to be six miles before they reach dry land and easier movement. Morgan took several canoes with him to assist in the movement through the swamp. The swamp soon became too difficult to move through. The mud was too deep to move by foot. Morgan decides to attempt a new method to move his men. Morgan orders a few men to push their way ahead in the canoes and sends the rest of the force back to get the boats and men they left behind. After forcing their way back to the boats, Morgan's men cut their way through the swampy river. By days end, they had only moved about six miles, but the entire force was linked back together on the river, near a place called Cedro Bueno.

When the third day was completed the men still had not eaten since they left San Lorenzo. This must have been an extremely low point for the men. Movement through the swamps of Panama is tough enough with out having to do it on an empty stomach. The energy required to move through the thick and muddy terrain must have completely exhausted the pirates. The failed attempt to reach dry land must have also forced the men to question their leaders ability. Morgan, no doubt, was hungry too, so he knew what his

men were going through. Morgan clearly had to feel the desperation of his men and the situation they faced. The question that Morgan faced was how much longer his men could continue to move with out food and still have the strength to fight.

On the fourth day, the 21st of January, Morgan and his hungry men divided into two groups before they began the days movement. A majority of the force moved by land, while the rest moved the boats through the Chagres. The guides split up, one of the guides led the force moving by land and the others guided the rest by water. The guides were careful and warned Morgan that they soon would be approaching terrain suitable for the Spanish to plan ambushes. Morgan had one of the guides travel further up front than his main force. The lead guide traveled ahead looking on both sides of the river for signs of Spanish soldiers.⁴ This technique of providing advanced warning is still used today, and is an example of how Morgan protected his force.

By noon time, Morgan's army of hungry men arrived near Barro Colorado, which was located near what is today called Barro Colorado Island. Barro Colorado Island was created when the canal was constructed and is home to the Smithsonian Tropical Research center. As Morgan's men approached, the advance guide warned that there was a possible ambush ahead. Morgan's men welcomed the opportunity to clash with some Spanish soldiers. Morgan's soldiers had all spent an enormous amount of energy over the last four days with nothing to eat. Morgan's men felt that if they found Spanish soldiers, then they could capture whatever food they had. Morgan's army quickly rushed to the possible ambush site thinking of nothing else but the possibility of gaining something to eat. All the men find is an old Spanish outpost that had been evacuated fairly recently.

The Spanish soldiers were careful not to leave any food. The pirates found nothing at the site, only a few small huts and some old leather bags. The pirates estimated that the outpost was recently a resting spot for five hundred Spanish soldiers. The Pirates were so hungry that they boiled and ate the leather bags left behind by the Spanish soldiers.⁵

According to Exquemelin, the pirates ate the leather bags by first cutting it into strips and softening the strips by beating the leather with rocks. The leather was then dipped into the river to soften it some more, then was cooked over a fire and eaten. After four days of moving through the jungle, the leather must have been a welcome sight, but the thought of so many Spanish soldiers near, was even better.

After Morgan's men finished their leather lunch they continued to move further along the river. By the end of day four they moved to another outposts called Tornomarcos. Again Morgan's men expected to be ambushed, but instead found nothing. The men rested for the night with pieces of leather in their stomachs and the thought of possibly catching the Spanish soldiers the next day.

The events of day four, as described by Exquemelin, are very strange. The story of the leather bags is told in great detail by Exquemelin, but it is hard to imagine. It is easy to imagine the pirates eager to eat the bags, but it is difficult to picture why the Spanish soldiers were so careless to leave behind bags when they stripped the outposts of everything else. Morgan's force consisted of twelve hundred men. It is not known how many men can be fed by one leather bag, but it must take a great deal of bags to feed twelve hundred. What the bags were exactly and just how many of them there were is a mystery. Perhaps the experience was shared by only a few men and the story grew to be

a legend. One thing is certain, Morgan's men were definitely hungry as they finished day four of their journey through the jungle with no food.

On the fifth day, the 22nd of January, Morgan and his men continued to move along the river as they had the day prior. Around midday Morgan and his men closed in on another Spanish outpost near Barbacoa. As they moved in, the pirates could see that this place was deserted as well. The pirates found a couple of small farms nearby, but they had been stripped of everything eatable as well. Morgan's men searched the entire area around the farms and the outposts. Their search paid off, the men found what must have been a hidden supply package left behind by the Spanish soldiers in a small cave. The contents were not nearly enough to feed Morgan's entire force, so Morgan ordered that the corn and fruit found be divided between the men who needed it most.⁶ This act is a good representation of Morgan's leadership. The fact that he divided up the food for the most in need is the act of a disciplined military officer, an officer who placed great concern on the welfare of the men in his command. The ability of Morgan's men to carry out this task, without stealing or fighting, is an indication of just how disciplined they were.

After the small rations were divided, Morgan's men moved a little further before resting for the night. Day five of the trip was complete and most of the men had still not eaten since they left San Lorenzo.

On the 23rd of January, Morgan and his men began their sixth day of the trip across the isthmus. The movement began slowly, due to the weakness brought on by the severe hunger. For the first time since the journey began, does Exquemelin mention that

the pirates begin to eat leaves off of the trees as they move through the jungle. By noon the men discover another plantation or small farm. The men find a small hut on the farm filled with corn. Morgan's men immediately begin to eat the corn dry. The corn was divided so that everyone received a share. It is difficult to say why the Spanish left this food supply for Morgan to find, when they so carefully stripped the food from everywhere else. Morgan was able to distribute the finding and keep his men moving.

Later in the day, Morgan's force encountered an ambush of natives. The pirates eager to capture anyone who could give them some food charged after the natives. The natives fled and quickly disappeared into the jungle and mysteriously reappeared on the other side of the river. The natives taunted Morgan's men yelling, "Ha, ye dogs! Go to the plain; go to the plain!"⁷

Several of Morgan's men jumped into the river and attempted to swim to the other side to capture the natives. Several men died in this vain attempt to capture some food. The natives only had a hundred men and arrows against Morgan's large force, but the natives were at home in the jungle and could move swiftly. Morgan ordered his men to never leave the main body of again. By giving this order, Morgan must have known that the natives wanted the pirates to chase them, this would give the natives the advantage and place his force in danger.

Day six ended with Morgan's men reaching their lowest point. Some men began to talk and spread rumors questioning Morgan's ability. Other men talked of going back to San Lorenzo and giving up on the whole expedition. Most men would rather die than to return the way they had come. Few men, the strongest and most experienced of the

force, laughed at all the rumblings of the doubters. They had moved the furthest distance on this day since the first day when they left San Lorenzo. The place where they camped was called Santa Cruz and the guides convinced the men that they only had a little further to go before they would be able to find food.⁸

On the morning of the seventh day, the 24th of January, Morgan and his men began the day by conducting maintenance on their equipment. Every man was instructed to dry fire their pistols and muskets before moving. This is an indication that Morgan thought he was getting close and that the Spanish would surely try to ambush his force before reaching the city.

Morgan and his men moved all morning until they came to a small village called Venta de Cruces. As the pirates approached the small village they saw smoke coming from the town and immediately thought the town to be occupied. The pirates moved as fast as they could to get to the town only to find it deserted. The Spanish had stripped the town of everything of value. The only thing that Morgan's men found was a storage house filled with wine to be taken back to Spain. Some of Morgan's men were quick to drink the wine and those who did became very ill. The men thought the wine was poisoned, but according to Exquemelin, the men fell sick only because the wine mixed with the leather they ate.⁹

Morgan rested his men at Venta de Cruces while he prepared for what was still ahead. Venta de Cruces was the last stop on the Chagres river for Morgan and his men. The village was located at the head of navigation of the river. From here, the Las Cruces trail ran directly to Panama City. Morgan ordered his men to remain in the village.

Morgan was certain that the Spanish were not too far off. Morgan restricted the movement outside the village to only companies of one hundred soldiers or more. A few of Morgan's men broke the restriction and wandered out on their own to find food. The men were ambushed by a group of Spanish soldiers and natives. Morgan's men ran back to the village as fast as they could, but one of the soldiers was caught by the ambush and taken prisoner.¹⁰ Morgan's order to restrict the movement of his men is another example of how Morgan protected his force. The men who broke the restriction were an example to the rest that perhaps their leader did know what he was doing.

Morgan remained in Venta de Cruces for the night. The next day, day eight of the journey, the 25th of January, Morgan began the land movement towards Panama city. Before he left Venta de Cruces, he sent back all the canoes but one so that they would not fall into the hands of the Spanish. Another example of how Morgan used protection.

Morgan begins his land move to Panama by placing two hundred men in front to serve as the advance guard for the main body. This technique is an excellent way to protect an army while moving through enemy territory. Movement techniques such as placing out security are still used in the military today. Security is the basic principle of protection, and Morgan understood security well. Morgan's security measures were for good reason too. Late in the day, after the men had been moving for over eight hours, they are ambushed by Indians who are armed with only arrows. Thousands of arrows filled the jungle, but Morgan's men cannot determine where they came from. Morgan's men hide and wait for the arrows to stop. After moving only a little further they are hit by another ambush, this time Morgan's men can see the Indians and begin to engage

them. Morgan's men quickly overcome the ambush by killing the chief of the tribe. The pirates suffer eight dead and several more wounded.¹¹

The story about the Indian ambush is told by Exquemelin. There is little doubt after reading the account that the Indians fought bravely and perhaps if they were armed with anything more than arrows they may have done more damage to Morgan. The question raised, is why did the Indians ambush Morgan? Were they fighting with the Spanish? It is likely that they were, since there is mention of Spanish soldiers with the Indians. It is not clear as to who was in charge of the ambush against Morgan. The Indians may have been persuaded, by the Spanish that Morgan and his men were coming to take their land, and that the Indians needed to fight them. This was the first attempt, since San Lorenzo, to deny Morgan Panama by using force. The mistake by the Spanish is they only used enough force to slow Morgan, they did not deny Morgan anything. Why the Spanish did not use more firepower against Morgan is a mystery. The terrain Morgan was moving his force through was very restrictive and provided numerous opportunities for a smaller force, with adequate fire power, to inflict heavy casualties on Morgan.

On the evening of the eighth day it began to rain. Morgan and his men attempted to find shelter to keep their weapons dry but the Spanish destroyed every shelter along the way. Only a few shelters were found. Morgan ordered that the weapons be guarded by what few could fit inside the small shelters to keep them dry. The rest of the men would rest in the open, and subject themselves to the rain. It rained all night, the motivation of the men laying on the wet ground must have been low. Day eight of journey ended, and the men still had not eaten since they left San Lorenzo.

The rain stopped on the morning of the ninth day, the 26th of January. Morgan quickly began to move his men using the same techniques as the day prior. Morgan surely felt that he would again encounter more ambushes as he pushed towards the city. Early in the morning, the advance of Morgan's men sighted a small detachment of Spanish soldiers. The advance guard chased the soldiers but were not able to capture or find any of them. The Spanish soldiers were most likely a reconnaissance party sent out from the city to determine Morgan's location. The chase led Morgan's men up a hill that allowed them to view the city of Panama. The men became excited to see the objective at last.

From the vantage point Morgan is able to see the Pacific Ocean and the city of Panama. Morgan is also able to see a ship and several boats leave the city and sail towards an island named Taboga to the south west of Panama City.¹² As Morgan's men move down the mountain they find farms with plenty of livestock to feed the party. The men hurried to gather and kill the livestock made up of cattle, donkeys, and some horses. The rest of the men built fires to cook the feast they had been so lucky to find. Morgan allowed the men to eat in order to regain their strength.

The livestock that Morgan's men found was a terrible mistake on the part of the Spanish. The tactic of the Spanish to this point was apparently to deny Morgan supplies which might force him to rethink his objective and possibly turn back. Up until this point, the Spanish had denied Morgan food and supplies fairly well. If this was the strategy of the Spanish they had accomplished it rather well, until day nine. Not only did the Spanish fail to deny Morgan's movement by using force, they provided him with

what he was in need of most, food. This was a tragic tactical error by the Spanish, one that is difficult to explain.

With his force well fed, Morgan ordered his men to move again and to take with them pieces of meat in order for them to have something to eat later. Morgan sent out several advance parties to capture prisoners that might be able to give Morgan some intelligence of the defense of the city. Morgan is able to move his force within sight of the city, but is not able to capture any prisoners. Morgan halted his men outside of the city and the range of their big guns. As Morgan's men rested, several Spanish scouting parties attempted to harass their camp yelling and taunting to the pirates. The pirates paid them little attention and finished their meal of meat they carried with them from their find earlier in the day.

Morgan was positioned to launch the biggest attack of his life and yet he had no intelligence of the cities defenses. Morgan was able to see what appeared to be an advance guard sent to block the road into the city. The Spanish force appeared only to be about two hundred men. Morgan knew nothing more about what the Spanish planned to stop the man that had not been stopped before. The lack of intelligence must have surely bothered Morgan. So far Morgan's plan had been working. Morgan was able to maneuver his force to the weakest part of the enemy defenses. The Spanish had known for some time that Morgan was coming, so did they have enough time to construct an adequate defense from a land assault? Morgan surely must have questioned himself again and again on the night of the ninth day. He was able to lead his men through what many said would be impossible and now he sat on the outskirts of one of the richest cities

in the New World. Morgan had made it, but how was he going to defeat the Spanish Army, that had been waiting for him and preparing for him.

Morgan's choice on the route he used to cross Panama was an extremely bold and courageous undertaking, but it was also a great example of maneuver. Morgan's application of protection enabled his force to come this far without serious incident. Morgan's leadership was tested throughout the move, but Morgan led by example and inspired his men to continue. To be successful in the battle will require Morgan to maneuver his force to place them in a position of tactical advantage. If Morgan can maneuver his force into a position of advantage, he will be able to place superior firepower against the enemy. The challenge that Morgan faced was exactly how to do just that. The lack of intelligence made Morgan's tactical planning difficult. Morgan needed to know where the enemy was to determine where the enemy was weak. Morgan needed to know how the enemy planned to use his force and what that force consisted of.

During the night Morgan sent out scouts to determine the disposition of the Spanish Army. The scout patrols were led by the three guides Morgan hired in Santa Catalina. The patrols returned before daybreak and informed Morgan that a good size force was waiting for him along the main road into the city. Early in the morning, Morgan began to move his force in battle formations towards the city. It was the 27th of January 1671.¹³

Based on the information provided by the scout patrols Morgan decided against taking the main road into the city. Morgan instead maneuvered his forces through the woods to by pass any ambushes the Spanish had planned for him. The movement

through the woods was very difficult and slowed Morgan and his men, which were divided into squadrons of 200 men each. To maneuver his force off the road was a brilliant move by Morgan, it avoided a frontal assault on the enemy. This is an example of a text book maneuver, avoid the enemy strong point by maneuver to a point where the enemy is weak. The route not only bypassed the Spanish ambushes and strong defenses, it allowed Morgan to seize a hill which offered him a vantage point from which to view the Spanish defenders. From the hill, Morgan was able to see that the Spanish placed all of their forces outside the city blocking the main road.¹⁴ Now Morgan could see exactly where the enemy was weak.

Since the city did not have defensive positions constructed to protect against a land attack, the Spanish chose to defend well forward of the city. The defender of the city was Don Juan Perez De Guzman, the same man who was forced to pay Morgan ransom for Porto Bello. De Guzman surely must have welcomed the chance to do battle with Morgan, but he will be forced to learn the hard way, that though his attacker was a pirate, Morgan possessed the experience of a seasoned field commander.

De Guzman defended the city with a large force. The Spanish consisted of 24 companies of foot infantry, of 100 men in each company, 400 horse mounted cavalry, less than 100 Indians, and numerous slaves. The total force for the Spanish was a little over 2,800 hundred fighting men to Morgan's force of a little over a thousand. The odds were three to one in favor of the Spanish. The basic principle used in the military today calls for a force ratio three to one over the enemy when attacking. The ratio for the defender is one to three, that is, the defender should be able to defend against a force

three times larger. De Guzman clearly had the odds in his favor, but De Guzman also faced Henry Morgan.

To defend the city De Guzman placed most of his forces along the main coastal road leading into the city from the west. The plan of the Spanish was to defend the city in depth, and consisted of many layers from the outskirts of the city all the way back to the city itself. The first line of defense was ambushes placed along the road to reduce Morgan's force and perhaps cause him to retreat. The next was a small fort placed along the road defended by 50 men and 8 large cannons. This fort apparently anchored the main defense line, well forward of the city. Between the fort and the city was De Guzman's main force of cavalry and infantry, positioned to defend the city. In the city itself were several trenches and fortifications that the Spanish had recently built, with cannon raised in good position to fire on any approach on the city. De Guzman also had a secret weapon or a reserve consisting of 2,000 cattle, which he intended to stampede into Morgan's men.

Many arguments have been made in history about the ability and experience of the Spanish soldiers that defended the city. Accounts vary from extremely experienced to an inexperienced militia force. Accounts told by Spanish historians vary from the accounts told by English writers. The truth is most likely somewhere in between. What can be determined though is De Guzman probably did not construct all that bad of a plan to defend the city, as most historical accounts accuse him of. The terrain leading into the city was relatively flat and was not the easiest ground to walk on. There really was no good terrain to defend from. It appears that what De Guzman did to make up for this was

to construct his defense in depth. The tactic is a sound tactic still used today. Most likely De Guzman planned to reduce Morgan's force as he approached the city along the road. The fort along the road was most likely where De Guzman hoped to stop the pirates and destroy Morgan with a possible counter attack with his infantry, while the cavalry flanked the dismounted pirates denying any retreat. If the Spanish main defense was somehow flanked or overrun, De Guzman could retreat his forces into the city and defend from trenches. This most likely was the plan of the Spanish, but since the defense did not go according to plan, the actual plan was never recorded. Most likely the Spanish who defended the city were not stupid, they did not want to fail. The defenders most likely understood the military tactics of the time. The unfortunate situation was that the Spanish faced Henry Morgan, who understood tactics better, or a little ahead of his time.

When De Guzman saw Morgan maneuver his force away from the road and the city, the Governor of Panama was not sure what Morgan was doing. Was he retreating or attempting to out flank the defense? De Guzman most likely thought that Morgan's maneuver had somehow exposed Morgan's force and offered the defenders an opportunity. Instead of pulling his force back to establish another line of defense, De Guzman ordered his men to advance. The Spanish advanced over the open ground with infantry fully deployed in battle formations in support of the cavalry.¹⁵

Upon seeing the large force the Spanish possessed, Morgan's men considered their chances of victory slim. Morgan's men were determined to take the city or to die trying. It was the only option the buccaneers would entertain. No man amongst them wished to turn back now. Behind them was the jungle, which only offered more of what

they had just suffered. To their front was one of the richest cities in the world, but was defended by a force determined not to allow the buccaneers in. The buccaneers agreed that this fight would be for victory or death. No surrender, no retreat, it was win or be killed.¹⁶

Before Morgan could determine where he would attack, the Spanish began to advanced towards him. Morgan must have been surprised by the actions of the Spanish, they were leaving their defenses and assuming the offensive. This was not the weak point of the enemy Morgan expected to find, but he took advantage of the situation. Morgan quickly organized his best shooters forward and prepared his lines by having the sharp shooters calmly take positions behind cover or on a knee. Morgan's sharp shooters were French Buccaneers who were the best shooters Morgan possessed.¹⁷ They carried a six foot long musket which fired a one ounce lead ball with deadly accuracy up to 200 meters. This was Morgan's firepower, and he knew just how to use it.

The over four hundred Spanish cavalry now began to charge Morgan. The fields were marshy which would not allow the horses to gain any speed. The cavalry moved awkwardly over the rough terrain towards Morgan. Morgan's disciplined men waited until the horses were upon them before they fired. When the 200 sharpshooters all fired the Spanish cavalry almost came to a complete stop. Morgan achieved firepower by placing his men in a point of advantage using maneuver, then applying well aimed and disciplined fire onto the enemy. Morgan's men were excellent shots, they had become skilled marksmen from the days they spent on Jamaica shooting cattle to make beef

boucan. The buccaneers hit their target, and many Spanish died with the first volley. The cavalry regrouped and continued to charge with infantry in support.

The fight on the plains lasted several hours before the Spanish had enough and began to retreat. Most of the Spanish cavalry was killed in the first hour of the battle. The infantry continued to advance on the buccaneers but were met with the same deadly accurate fire from the pirate's muskets. The defenders attempted to launch their secret weapon of stampeding oxen. Two herds of oxen were stampeded towards the buccaneers by farmers. Once on the field the oxen slowed and were simply driven away from the buccaneers.¹⁸ The secret weapon did not work, the oxen only littered the field. Sensing defeat, the Spanish became disorganized and ran in every direction to flee the field.

Morgan's men now advanced on the Spanish, killing them as they attempted to run. By mid morning the battle was over and Morgan's men inflicted terrible damage to the Spanish defenders. The Spanish lost over 600 hundred dead and the buccaneers lost only 15 men. The Spanish lost the battle but the city was still several miles away.

Morgan began to move his forces towards the city before the Spanish could regroup and stage a defense. Some of the defenders retreated to the city with Morgan and his men right behind them. Those that reached the city attempted to make a stand. The well placed cannon of the defenders slowed Morgan's assault. Morgan maneuvered his forces to by pass the range of the defenders artillery. Using maneuver, Morgan was able to enter the city, but his men were forced to fight from street to street. The battle for the city took several hours. The buccaneers were forced to move from house to house attempting to clear the resisting Spanish soldiers from the city. The defense from inside

the city was strong, but the numbers of the defenders were so few that they could not hold out long. The defenders could not hold back the buccaneers, and were overcome by the amount of attackers and the firepower they possessed. By mid afternoon, Morgan and his men captured Panama City.

As Morgan began to occupy the city, the Spanish were reluctant to yield. The Spanish leader had given an order to the captain of artillery to ignite the city if all were going to be lost. Large amounts of powder had been strategically placed in several buildings. As the last of the Spanish soldiers fled, the captain lit the fuse. The explosion could be heard from miles away.¹⁹ The city began to burn immediately.

Morgan and his men quickly rushed to put out the flames. The city consisted of over 7,000 homes, most of which were made of wood. The fire burned all night and by morning the only buildings left standing were the ones that were made of stone. The stone buildings left standing were mostly public buildings and the large cathedral in the center of the city.

When the fire died down Morgan realized the extent of the damage. Morgan commented about the fire in his report to Modyford, "Thus was consumed the famous and ancient city of Panama, the greatest mart for silver and gold in the whole world."²⁰ Morgan's men searched for whatever they could salvage from the fire. Very little of value was found.

Many reasons are given as to how and why the city burned. Most early accounts blame Morgan for starting the blaze. This seems very unlikely since Morgan was the one who lost the most from the fire. Other accounts explain that the fire was simply an

accident caused by the battle. Recent historians have found that the Spanish did actually set the fire as part of the last ditch attempt to deny Morgan the wealth of the city.

When Morgan occupied the town his men began to search through the flames for anything left of value. Very little gold and silver was found in the town. Morgan's men rushed to capture whatever they could from the burning city. When the men found large a storage of wine, Morgan ordered the men not to drink any. Morgan told his men that the wine was most likely poisoned by the fleeing defenders and was left there only to trick the pirates into drinking it. Many historians feel the real reason Morgan gave the order not to drink was simply to prevent his men from getting drunk. Morgan owned the city, but he did not totally destroy the Spanish army defending it. Morgan thought the Spanish would rally and counterattack, for this reason, Morgan needed to keep his men alert. What Morgan's reasons were for not letting his men drink the wine is not important, what is important is that Morgan took the correct steps to protect his force. If the wine had been poisoned many of Morgan's men would have died. If the wine was not poisoned, many of Morgan's men would have become drunk and may have presented the Spanish with an opportunity to retake the city. Morgan must have seen that he was not in total control of the situation.

Taking precautions against a counterattack is still a part of military doctrine today. What Morgan did when he occupied the city is what the military calls today, consolidation on the objective. It is at this point, when the attacking force is attempting to reorganize, that they are vulnerable to an enemy counterattack. Reorganizing the force quickly to deny the enemy an opportunity is a method of protecting the force.

Consolidation on the objective is an extremely difficult task, and requires a disciplined force to execute. Morgan reorganized his men and placed them in key positions inside the city to defend against a counterattack. Morgan divided his force, which allowed him to defend the city and search the city for prisoners and valuables at the same time. The steps Morgan took after he occupied the city is more evidence of how he protected his force.

Morgan divided his force again, this time to search the surrounding area for prisoners. Morgan also sent back a large force to Fort San Lorenzo to inform them of his success and to begin the preparations needed to make the return voyage. Many prisoners were captured and questioned about the whereabouts of any valuable. The prisoners told Morgan that most of the money had been placed on ships and sent to Ecuador with most of the citizens of the city. Other citizens were sent to the near by island of Taboga, in order to hide them from the pirates. Taboga Island is located only several miles from Panama City and today serves as a recreation spot for Panamanians and tourists who visit the island daily. Morgan sent men to the island to search the island and bring back anything of value. Morgan's men found several boats loaded with merchandise from the city. Many people remained on the island and attempted to hide from the pirates. Morgan's search party quickly became relaxed with their find on the island and began to celebrate. They spent the night drinking and missed the opportunity they were sent there to find. The next morning they soon found out that they had been tricked and that a ship filled with gold had been hidden on the other side of the island. By the time they realized their mistake the ship was gone. The search party was forced to return to Morgan and

explain their stupidity. The prisoners taken confirmed the story of the missed opportunity. Morgan decided to send out a small fleet in an attempt to track down the escaped treasure ship. The buccaneers searched for the ship for eight days, but could not find it.²¹ The ship most likely escaped to Ecuador.

By this time Morgan's party had returned from San Lorenzo. The informed Morgan that the garrison left behind at San Lorenzo was in good order. While Morgan was gone, the men at San Lorenzo had captured a Spanish ship filled with food. The ship was captured when it approached San Lorenzo not knowing that the pirates were now in possession of it. The buccaneers raised the Spanish colors over the fort to lure the ship into the harbor. When the Spanish ship was close enough to see that they had been tricked, it was too late.²² This news allowed Morgan to stay longer than he planned in Panama City. Morgan now had more time to search for the escaped ship as well as the surrounding countryside for hidden valuables.

Morgan remained in the city for three weeks searching everyday. The buccaneers sent out search parties one after another until every area was covered. After three weeks Morgan began to make preparations for his return trip. Morgan faced many challenges in preparing his force for the long journey back to San Lorenzo. Morgan needed to move a large amount of captured merchandise as well as food for his force. To prepare for the move, the buccaneers captured animals to carry the heavy loads, they also salted beef for food on the trip. Morgan also needed to defend his men and all that he captured from the remaining Spanish, who Morgan was sure would attempt an ambush on his return trip. Morgan ordered his men to search for any signs of ambushes or attempts by the Spanish

to attack. The daily search parties captured a significant amount of prisoners who were questioned for any intelligence they could provide. Morgan learned that the Governor of Panama, who survived the first battle, was attempting to rally a force to ambush Morgan. The Governor was not able to convince the remaining men that they could inflict any damage, and lost the support of the soldiers.²³

On February 24, 1671, Morgan departed the city. Morgan took with him 600 prisoners from the city. Morgan threatened to take the prisoners back to his country and make them slaves unless they paid a ransom for their release. Some of the prisoners were able to pay the price, but most did not and were forced to take the trip back across the isthmus with Morgan. The return trip took Morgan two weeks, his force arrived back at San Lorenzo on the 9th of March.²⁴ The trip back was much less difficult for Morgan. This time he could take the road to Venta de Cruces and boats all the way back down the Chagres River to San Lorenzo. What must have been difficult was moving all the supplies and the prisoners. Little is written about Morgan's return trip to San Lorenzo. The trip surely was difficult given the number of prisoners and supplies that Morgan was transporting. The movement must have been slow going, Morgan still expected the Spanish to ambush him and attempt to recapture the prisoners he had taken. Given the circumstances, two weeks is a remarkable time for such a large body of personnel and equipment.

Upon reaching San Lorenzo, Morgan had his men divided the prize they captured from the great city of Panama. The amount was very small, each buccaneer received only what would be a little over one hundred U.S. dollars today. This was not what anyone

expected from one of the wealthiest cities in the New World. Rumors began to circulate that Morgan himself was keeping all the wealth for himself. The buccaneers must have been extremely disappointed that their hard efforts did not pay more. As agreed though, each person received only the amount promised before hand. Morgan's great fleet divided at San Lorenzo. Morgan himself sailed for Jamaica with four ships. The rest of the fleet sailed in their own direction. Some sailed to Hispaniola others towards Costa Rica.

Early accounts claim that Morgan deserted his force at San Lorenzo and made off with most of the money. There is no evidence that supports Morgan keeping more than his share, and certainly no evidence that supports he deserted the fleet. What Morgan did do was dissolve the command at San Lorenzo.²⁵ If Morgan attempted to abandon the fleet, the other ships could have prevented him from sailing, or chased him down if he did sneak away. The other members of the fleet all went their own way and let Morgan go his. Morgan is also accused of sinking the fleet to cover his escape. This is not true. Sunken ships from this time period do rest off the shores of San Lorenzo, but these are Spanish ships and the four ships that Morgan's fleet sank when they arrived. No evidence supports any other part of the fleet being stranded. The fleet simply went there separate ways. Given the make up of the fleet, it makes tactical sense that they split up at San Lorenzo. Perhaps this was the plan all along, with the prize divided, the fleet stood a better chance of escaping any Spanish attempts to capture them at sea.

It is easy to imagine that the buccaneers must have been a little disappointed with the amount of their share, but Morgan was not to blame. The Spanish defenders were to

blame for the buccaneer's disappointment. The best that can be said about the Spanish defense of Panama City, is that the defenders did protect the majority of the wealth of the city from falling into Morgan's hands.

This was how the greatest military accomplishment of Henry Morgan's life came to an end. The shares were divided on the shores of Panama and the buccaneers parted to go their separate ways. Morgan's greatest tactical achievement did not result in the monetary prize that he, and his men, were certain they would capture. Every expedition in Morgan's life was a huge success. Panama was a great military accomplishment, but it meant very little to the men who fought for Morgan. The lack of booty found in Panama was a great disappointment for the buccaneers and was the source of rumors against Morgan for the rest of Morgan's life.

Morgan's attack on Panama was a devastating defeat for the Spanish who were forced to rebuild the city in an area that could be defended more easily. The new city was eventually rebuilt at its present location today. Though the Spanish were defeated it is unlikely that Morgan's men viewed their effort as a victory. To Morgan's men, who received little money for their efforts, Panama must have seemed more like a defeat.

Morgan's attack on Panama would be the last great adventure for the pirates and the last for their leader, Henry Morgan. With the operation over, Henry Morgan must have felt that he could now return to Jamaica and safely retire. Morgan had accumulated a sufficient amount of wealth and land over the years, he must have felt that the timing was right to settle down. The English throne however, would disrupt Morgan's retirement plans with a demand for an explanation as to why Morgan broke the treaty

with Spain. This was not a matter that the English government was willing to simply overlook.

¹Captain James Burney, *History of the Buccaneers of America* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891), 76.

²Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 247.

³*Ibid.*, 248.

⁴*Ibid.*, 250.

⁵*Ibid.*, 250.

⁶*Ibid.*, 252.

⁷*Ibid.*, 253.

⁸*Ibid.*, 253-254.

⁹*Ibid.*, 254-255.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 256.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 256-257.

¹²*Ibid.*, 259.

¹³Burney, 77.

¹⁴Exquemelin, 261.

¹⁵Stephan H. Dewey, "The Panama Raid", *British History Illustrated* 3 (May 1978) : 24.

¹⁶Exquemelin, 262.

¹⁷David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag* (New York: Random House, 1995) 51.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 51-52.

¹⁹Ibid., 52.

²⁰Ibid., 52.

²¹Exquemelin, 271.

²² Ibid., 272.

²³Ibid., 278.

²⁴Ibid., 281-282.

²⁵Burney, 81.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Morgan returned to Jamaica as a hero, the conqueror of the greatest city in the New World. On the thirty-first of May 1671, the Council of Jamaica convened and voted to officially thank Morgan for the successful execution of his commission.¹ This act expressed complete approval for Morgan's actions, at least by the local government. The same approval was not shared in England. Morgan's attack on Panama outraged the Spanish Throne, and the Spanish demanded that action be taken. Initially, the English government played the incident down, blaming the whole thing on a few privateers who got out of hand.² When it became apparent to the English that their explanation of privateers acting out of control would not satisfy the Spanish, the English were forced to act. England selected a new governor for Jamaica.

The new man was Sir Thomas Lynch, and he was sent to Jamaica not only to become the new governor but also to arrest the man he was replacing. Lynch was directed to arrest Sir Thomas Modyford, the man who approved Morgan's actions, and send him back to England. When Modyford arrived in London he was placed in the Tower of the city to serve his sentence. After serving two years, Modyford was released and eventually returned to Jamaica as the Chief Justice.³

The arrest of Modyford was not enough to appease the Spanish, they called for the arrest of Henry Morgan, who the Spanish claimed was responsible. In April of 1672, Henry Morgan was arrested and brought to London to serve his sentence. Morgan never

spent a day in confinement; he was free to visit friends and relations while in London. Morgan was a prisoner of the city, a sort of house arrest or parole, while he waited to see what his future would hold.⁴

While Morgan was in England, Port Royal was coming under pressure from increased pirate activity. The governor was worried that Jamaica might be attacked by French privateers. To answer the threat, England decided to appoint a new governor; and to ensure that Jamaica would be protected, Henry Morgan was appointed as the Lieutenant Governor. The decision was announced in January 1674, not quite two years after Morgan's arrest. Prior to Morgan departing London to return to his beloved Jamaica, Morgan was knighted by King Charles II. It is not certain whether the knighthood was bestowed upon Morgan because of the position he was appointed to or whether it was for his lifetime accomplishments.⁵ Whatever King Charles reason was for the knighthood, it is clear that Morgan was highly regarded by his government. Morgan was certainly not a pirate or a criminal in the eyes of the English Throne.

The boy who left England on a military expedition at age twenty was leaving England again, this time a knight. Admiral, Knight, and now Lieutenant Governor, Morgan had done well for himself, leaving England as a hero to return to his beloved Jamaica. Morgan's departure from England was a special event, perhaps the pinnacle in his career, but his life was about to take another turn. As everything else in the life of Henry Morgan was difficult, so too was his return trip to Jamaica. The ship he sailed back to Jamaica on, the Jamaica Merchant, wrecked off the coast of Isla Vace, the same island where Morgan had gathered his army of buccaneers. All the passengers made it to

shore, but the cannon Morgan was bringing to defend Port Royal sank with the ship. In March of 1676, Morgan finally made it back to Jamaica.⁶

The job of Lieutenant Governor was not the demanding position Morgan was accustomed to. Morgan served under four governors, two of which had a difficult time controlling the enterprising methods of Morgan. The post of Lieutenant Governor paid well, but Morgan was not at his best when he was idle. Lord Vaughn complained of Morgan's, "imprudence and unfitness to have anything to do with civil government."⁷ When Lord Vaughn was replaced and returned to England, Morgan served as the acting Governor for four months.

As Acting Governor, Morgan's military skills were again seen. When a large French Fleet was reported to be off the coast of Curacao, Morgan took this to be a threat to Port Royal. Morgan declared martial law and raised a militia. Morgan ordered the construction of two new forts to boost the defenses of the port. Morgan also ordered a salvage operation to recover the sunken cannon off the coast of Isla Vaca. The salvage was a success in bringing back twenty-two guns to add to Morgan's defense. Port Royal was not attacked but the defenses Morgan constructed were known as "Morgan's Lines."⁸ The people surely felt secure knowing that they had Henry Morgan, the man who had demolished so many defenses in his day, constructing the defense of their city. This was the last military operation by Henry Morgan.

Morgan's health had decreased during his stay in England and his life style in Jamaica of late nights and hard drinking were beginning to take their toll. Morgan was removed from his post as Lieutenant Governor and later removed from his seat on the

Jamaica Council. Morgan spent most of his remaining years salvaging his reputation. In 1684 Morgan successfully sued the English company who printed the English translation of Exquemelin's book. The publishing company printed a lengthy formal apology to Morgan.⁹ Morgan was re-appointed to his post as Lieutenant Governor in the last year of his life by Christopher Monck, the Second Duke of Albermarle, and the newly appointed Governor of Jamaica.¹⁰

Morgan got along well with the new governor and Monck did much to restore the reputation of Sir Henry Morgan. The relationship didn't last long. Morgan was re-appointed in April, 1688, and would only serve a few months. On the 25th of August, 1688, Sir Henry Morgan died at the age of 53.¹¹ Morgan died of dropsy, his medical treatment during his last days were recorded in Sir Hans Sloane's case study of Morgan. Sloane was serving as doctor to the governor and treated Morgan in his last days.¹²

A ceremony was held for Morgan on the 26th of August. The man in charge of the ceremony was Captain Lawrence Wright, Commander of the Assistance. He wrote the following in his journal:

August 1688. Saturday 25 This day about eleven hours noone Sir Henry Morgan died, & the 26th was brought over from passage fort to the King's house at Port Royall, from thence to the Church, & after a sermon was carried to the Pallisadoes & there buried. All the forts fired an equal number of guns, wee fired two & twenty & after wee & the Drake had fired, all the merchant men fired.¹³

Sir Henry Morgan was buried in Jamaica on the 26th of August, 1688. Four years later an earthquake struck Jamaica sending most of Port Royal and the grave of Henry Morgan into the sea.¹⁴

The sack of Panama was the last major undertaking by the group of men known as buccaneers. Pirates and piracy continued after Morgan, but the day when nations used privateers for large scale operations, in the fashion as Morgan did, ended with Morgan. Piracy continued on a much smaller scale and was mostly directed against small trading vessels carried out by true pirates and were criminal acts, not acts sanctioned by a nation.

The history of Henry Morgan is a difficult one to study. Morgan was not a pirate, but almost every book written about pirates will mention Morgan as one of the most famous and fiercest of all the pirates. Morgan was a man who could have probably been called a natural born leader. Morgan knew how to lead men and this proved to be his biggest talent. Morgan was a soldier loyal to his King, but executed his duties in the fashion of the times. Morgan is accused of extreme cruelties towards innocent people and prisoners. Accounts of torture are claimed against Morgan in every campaign. There are too many accounts to say, as some historians have, that Morgan did not know of, and disapproved of torture. Morgan may or may not have actively participated in cruel acts, but he most certainly had to know what his men were doing. As the leader, Morgan was responsible for the actions of his men. All armies, to include the buccaneers, who fought during this time were guilty of cruel and inhumane acts. Morgan and his men were no exception. This explanation is not an attempt to justify what Morgan's men did, only to state that Morgan was guilty of inhumane treatment.

It is upsetting that so many stories about the life of Henry Morgan were written based on the incorrect version of his life as told by Exquemelin. The life of Morgan and his military exploits were an important part of the development of the New world. The

study of Morgan provides a better understanding of the impact on the New World by England and Spain. Morgan's life also sheds light on military doctrine used today and may provide some insight in developing future doctrine.

Morgan succeeded in taking Panama City because he was a great leader and tactician. Morgan knew how to successfully apply combat power no matter what the odds were against him. It does not take an expert tactician or military historian to figure out why Morgan was successful. Morgan always looked for a way he could win. Morgan applied the elements of combat power, maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership, in a way that ensured victory.

The first element of combat power is maneuver. Morgan knew that to win he needed to maneuver his force into a position of advantage while placing the enemy in a position of disadvantage. Morgan used maneuver to achieve surprise, psychological shock, physical momentum, massed effects and moral dominance. Morgan clearly used maneuver in his attack against Panama to exploit the enemies weakness. Morgan moved his force across the isthmus and attacked Panama from the rear. By moving his force over land, Morgan attacked the enemy where they were not prepared to be attacked. In retrospect this sounds simple, but there was nothing simple about moving such a large body of men across the jungles of Panama. The maneuver across Panama is a great example of Morgan's ability to apply combat power.

Morgan's maneuver across Panama to capture Panama City is a great example for military leaders today. Morgan's maneuver teaches the modern military leader several lessons, they are: The enemy will always do what you don't expect him to do. The enemy

will always attack from the direction you may think is impossible. When in the offense, always look for a way to maneuver your force where the enemy does not expect you, place your strength against his weakness. These lessons are the essence of what military doctrine teaches leaders today in regards to maneuver.

Maneuver is not as simple as following a few basic rules. The commander must determine where and how he will maneuver his force into a position of advantage over the enemy. The risk is not to place your own force in a position of disadvantage. Morgan's maneuver across Panama illustrates just how easy it might be to place your own force in a position of disadvantage while attempting to maneuver on the enemy.

Morgan's move was well over sixty miles, and he did it over a nine day period. Given the time Morgan took, the distance does not appear to be much, but the terrain Morgan faced was the real challenge. An average light infantry unit in the US Army today would have a difficult time covering this distance through the jungle. A company of one hundred infantry soldiers would most likely not all make it.¹⁵ The effects of the heat alone would stop several soldiers from making the move.

A good example of the difficulties moving through the jungle is seen in the history of the US Army in Panama. Prior to the construction of the Panama Canal, the US Military would transport soldiers and their dependents to California through Panama. The journey would require the group to cross the isthmus where eventually the railroad was constructed. In 1852, several hundred men of the US Army Fourth Infantry along with their dependents made the crossing in July on their way to California. They did not all make it, 150 men, women, and children died. The man in charge was Captain Ulysses S,

Grant, who wrote later of the experience. "The horrors of the road in the rainy season are beyond description."¹⁶

The loss of life is always a threat when moving through the jungle or in a tropical climate. Today's military units face the possibility of soldiers falling victim to heat related injuries which can be life threatening. Navigation is extremely difficult in the jungle, and even the best of guides can make mistakes in the thick vegetation with numerous uncharted streams. The fact that Morgan moved his entire force across Panama and kept them in condition to fight is simply remarkable. This clearly demonstrates the strength of Morgan's men. Morgan used maneuver correctly in his attack on Panama, but he exposed himself to serious threats along the way. The move could have been a tragic failure, instead it was a huge success.

Given the difficulties of the movement required by Morgan and his men it is easy to see how the Spanish felt protected. To the defenders, the jungle provided an obstacle that prohibited any approach to the city from the rear. Morgan proved them wrong, but it is important to understand that the Spanish soldiers were not stupid. The odds were in their favor. This is an important lesson for the military leader today. Often the US Army relearns this lesson at the National Training Center, or at the Joint Readiness Center. The enemy is capable of doing, and often does, what too often is said they cannot, or will not do. Morgan's example of how a small force is capable of doing what they are not expected to do, is a lesson for today's military commanders.

Too often military planners fall into the trap of trusting what military analyst say the enemy will do, or what the odds favor the enemy doing. Good military leaders look at

their plan from the enemies point of view, and plan for what they would do if they were the enemy. It is therefor important for military commanders today to recognize the weak areas in their own plan and ensure significant measures are in place to prevent the enemy from exploiting it.

The second element of combat power is firepower. Morgan succeeded in applying firepower in the battle for Panama City. Morgan placed his force in a position of advantage, by using maneuver. This position allowed Morgan to apply his destructive force to obtain the desired effects against the enemy. When Morgan maneuvered his men around the Spanish defenses outside of Panama City, he placed his force in a position of advantage that facilitated the use his firepower. The defenders reacted by charging with cavalry and in so doing, placed themselves at even a greater disadvantage. Morgan's arsenal consisted of well disciplined buccaneers with long-barreled muskets. Morgan's ability to combine his firepower with his maneuver force is what gave him the advantage. The Spanish reaction to Morgan's maneuver, created the situation that proved to be the decisive point in capturing the city. The decisive time and place came when the Spanish charged Morgan's men. Morgan was in position to use his firepower when and where it was needed. When Morgan's men halted the Spanish advance, Morgan defeated the enemies ability and will to fight.

Morgan's application of fire power is a lesson for military planners today and in the future. The doctrine of the future will call for quick military strikes using a small task force with overwhelming combat power. This doctrine of tomorrow will require precision targeting to determine when and where to best apply firepower. The numerical advantage

may or may not favor the attacker, but the numerical disadvantage will be reduced by precision weaponry and superior firepower. The lessons Morgan taught the Spanish nearly three hundred years ago should provide some input for the doctrine of tomorrow.

The third element of combat power is protection. The exploits of Morgan provide great examples for today's military leader on the importance of conserving the force so that it can be applied at the decisive point and place. Morgan successfully applied the element of protection while moving his force across Panama. Morgan did not use all four components of protection as they are defined today, but he did use them. There are lessons to be learned from each component of protection.

The first component of protection is operational security. Morgan used operational security the best he could. Every attempt was made to keep Morgan's plan a secret, but the plan still leaked. Morgan lost total surprise, but it is doubtful that he ever thought he would achieve total surprise. Morgan did manage to keep his plans secret long enough not to allow for additional defenses to be constructed. This lesson is still very true today. It is extremely difficult to achieve total surprise in a military operation, but there are other ways to achieve surprise. Morgan used these ways extremely well. Surprise can also be obtained from attacking an enemy where and when they least expect it.

Operations security is one method that allows the commander to achieve surprise.

Military operations seldom achieve total surprise. The lesson to learn from Morgan is that the enemy may expect the operation, but good operational security will deny the enemy the details of the plan.

Morgan also successfully used operational security in his use of reconnaissance. Morgan used reconnaissance to determine the security of the route he had chosen. By determining the security of the route, Morgan did not create a target of his force for the enemy. This lesson has remained unchanged throughout history. Morgan did not expose his force unnecessarily, even though his movement was risky, Morgan always maintained security. This lesson is extremely valuable for force protection in today's military. Today the US Military faces numerous unknown threats while on deployment. Protection of the force must be the number one priority for commanders when positioning and sustaining military units in areas that possess even a remote threat.

The second component of protection is health. Morgan's use of protection in the area of health only offers one very important and obvious lesson. The lesson for today, is that casualties will occur in a military operation, and the plan needs to address how to handle them. Morgan planned for casualties, monetary compensations were agreed upon before the plan was executed. Surgeons were taken along with Morgan for every operation.¹⁷

The third component of protection is safety. Morgan's attack on Panama city was an extremely risky operation. All of Morgan's operations were risky, but Morgan acknowledged the risk before creating his plan. Today's military does this by conducting a risk analysis prior to every operation. The key to reducing risk is to identify the risk. Once the risk is identified, steps can be taken to reduce or eliminate the risk. Morgan's attack on Panama City is an example of how a military unit is capable of executing a high risk operation. The military will always be required to accomplish difficult tasks, that are

extremely high risk. Today's military successfully executes high risk operations everyday. The reason for the military's success in this area, is due to proper risk analysis. Missions will only become more risky in the future. Despite all attempts to reduce risk through technology, risk will always be a part of military operations. Commanders and planners must always remember the only way to reduce risk is by first identifying what the risk is.

The fourth component of protection is the prevention of fratricide. Morgan was able to successfully capture Panama City without any instance of fratricide. Morgan was able to execute his bold plan without much consideration of fratricide. Morgan's men were extremely disciplined soldiers. Preventing fratricide while not constricting the boldness of the commander is extremely difficult. The lesson to be taken from Morgan is that disciplined soldiers are capable of executing extremely difficult missions. Numerous control measures are used today to reduce the possibility of fratricide, but at the core still remains the requirement for a disciplined soldier.

The fourth element of combat power is leadership. The study of Morgan clearly demonstrates that he was a competent and confident commander. Morgan knew how to lead soldiers and is an example of how important leadership is to the application of combat power. The leader determines how to use maneuver and how to apply firepower and protection. Morgan was a leader that did it right every time. The study of Morgan is extremely important for today's military leader. At the operational level Morgan's vision was vital to the construction of his complex plans. At the tactical level Morgan's strong will and his tactical competence, inspired his men to accomplish the difficult tasks Morgan demanded of them.

Leadership is what separates the military profession from other occupations. Morgan's leadership is what gave him the advantage over the larger forces he faced. Morgan's leadership is what held his force together, even though his force consisted of men from many different nationalities. Morgan's leadership is what enabled him to focus the energy of his force against the enemy. Henry Morgan is a good example of how leadership is vital to all military operations. A majority of operations conducted in the military today are either joint, conducted with two or more services, or combined, conducted with another country. In the future, the military will also work with more non-governmental agencies. Good leadership is what will make the mission succeed. According to the U.S. Department of Defense leadership will continue to play a vital role in the military of the 21st Century. The Department of Defense claims that; "The dynamic nature of joint operations in the 21st century battlespace will require continued emphasis on strong leadership skills." The Department of Defense further comments, "Leadership greatly effects a joint force's ability to build and sustain combat power."¹⁸

Morgan was able to organize a force from a group of men from different countries, equip them, place them on ships, sail them to an objective, and successfully accomplish the mission. Henry Morgan is a good example of how leadership will play an even more important role in future force projection operations.

By applying the elements of combat power successfully Morgan was able to seize a city against overwhelming odds. This thesis documents Morgan's application of maneuver, firepower, protection and leadership in his capture of Panama City. Some historians may call Henry Morgan's men thieves and butchers, but they were also skilled

with weapons and executing successful tactics against trained soldiers. Henry Morgan may have possessed many poor qualities for a man, but he was a courageous and fearless leader who understood how to apply combat power to defeat his enemies. The study of Sir Henry Morgan serves as an example for today's military leader on how to fight.

Many studies have been done on piracy and Henry Morgan, not all of them are factual. It is difficult to find objectivity in the historical record of Henry Morgan. As most famous people in history, Morgan is credited and blamed for doing things he did, and did not actually do. What Morgan did do, can still be seen today by visiting the cities he captured. It does not take a military historian or a tactical genius to appreciate Morgan's exploits when standing on the sites in which they occurred.

The difficulties Morgan faced can be seen by walking the remains of the forts in Porto Bello, San Lorenzo, and Panama City. Appreciation for Morgan's movement across Panama can be gained by walking the many trails in the parks of Panama. Most trails, such as the Las Cruces Trail in Soberania National Park, are carefully maintained for tourism. Deeper appreciation for Morgan's difficult move comes when walking through the jungle off the trail. Most of the route Morgan took across Panama is now covered by the Panama canal, but ruins remain at San Lorenzo, Cruz, and Panama City.

When standing on the ruins of Fort San Lorenzo it does not take long to imagine the difficulties Captain Bradley faced. The ruins at Fort San Lorenzo offer a spectacular view of the Atlantic ocean and an insight to the struggles both the Spanish and the buccaneers faced. Moving through the jungle of Panama is as difficult today as it was for Morgan and his men. The jungle is difficult to navigate through. The jungle is full of

wonderful plants and animals, but for the inexperienced traveler the jungle can be extremely dangerous. Morgan's choice to attack Panama City from the rear sounds easy to the reader of history, but to truly gain an appreciation for Morgan's maneuver, it is first necessary to walk through the jungles of Panama. A long walk through a thick jungle is an experience that will last a life time. It most likely was an experience that Morgan and his men never forgot.

The ruins of Panama City are much more spread out than they are at Porto Bello and San Lorenzo. Morgan's attack routes are difficult to see, but a good portion of the old city still remains. Visitors are free to explore the sites that remain, the old city is located just outside the new Panama City. New studies are currently being done on the ruins. It will be interesting to see if any hidden valuables are recovered.

This thesis has shown that Henry Morgan was successful in capturing Panama City because he successfully applied the elements of combat power. It is easy for a military professional today to become overwhelmed with the study of current doctrine. It is important, necessary, and at times, refreshing to study the evolution of modern doctrine through the study of military history. The study of Henry Morgan is a study of a successful military tactician. Henry Morgan offers many lessons to today's military leader. This thesis barely scratched the surface on the life of Sir Henry Morgan and the many lessons that can be learned from his exploits. Morgan knew how to fight, he knew how to use his force, he knew how to apply combat power.

¹Francis Russell Hart, *Admirals of the Caribbean* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1922), 91.

²David Cordingly, *Under the Black Flag* (New York: Random House, 1996), 54.

³Ibid., 54.

⁴Ibid., 54.

⁵Ibid., 54.

⁶Ibid., 55.

⁷Ibid., 55.

⁸Ibid., 55.

⁹Hart, 93-106.

¹⁰Richard B. Sheridan, "The Doctor and the Buccaneer", *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Science* 41 (1986): 76-87.

¹¹Hart, 106-107.

¹²Sheridan, 84.

¹³Hart, 107.

¹⁴Sheridan, 84.

¹⁵From the author's own experience as a light infantry company commander in Panama.

¹⁶David McCullough, *The Path Between the Seas* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977), 39-40.

¹⁷Sheridan, 79.

¹⁸Department of Defense, "Pathways to the Future", *Defense* 97 6 (1998) : 8.

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